

Sports Illustrated

JANUARY 7, 1980 \$1.25

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Shopwalk

by STEVE WOLF

PARKER BROTHERS GOT A MONOPOLY BY MAKING THE LIVING ROOM NERF TURF

In case it slipped your mind during the Christmas rush, January will mark the 10th birthday of that four-inch foam filled-of furniture, that rainy-day mother's helper, that awakener of athletic fantasies, the NERF ball. That little spheroid has gained so much momentum bouncing through the decade that the NERF line of products now accounts for 15% of the total business of Parker Brothers, the largest proprietary board-game company in the world. Not many people know this, but if all the NERF footballs ever sold—a staggering 18 million—were lined up end to end, they would stretch from Boston to Denver, presumably without knocking over a lamp.

The legend of NERF began in early 1969 at one of Parker Brothers' testing laboratories in Beverly, Mass. A design firm in Minneapolis had submitted a model for an indoor volleyball game. Parker Brothers employees were trying it out when in walked Edward Parker, then the president of the company. Parker, who died in 1974, was a fun-loving guy, so one of the players just tossed the foam ball from the volleyball set at him. It would be nice to record for posterity that Parker caught the ball and shouted, "Nerf! We've struck gold!" but what he said was something like, "Forget the volleyball game, just market the ball." The rest, as they say in game box, is history.

The name NERF was gleaned from hundreds of suggestions made by Parker employees, and the company was reluctant at first to use it because it went against the grain of the firm's classic titles like Monopoly, Risk and Sorry. When NERF was introduced to the public in 1970, it was billed as the "world's first official indoor ball," but it was not an overnight success. Buyers for toy stores tended to be skeptical of something so simple—a little four-inch ball made of cut polycarbonate foam that was firm enough to be thrown effectively in still air but squishy enough so that a NERF football couldn't crack a pane of glass. But slowly, by word of bounce, sales began to pick up, and by the end of the year four million NERFs had been sold. The original ball was followed by a slightly larger version called the Super NERF. It, too, was a bestseller. A disc jockey in Nashville created a fictitious NERF Ball League, complete with players, teams and divisions, and he included NERF League scores in each sportscast. NERF fans were pleased, and Parker Brothers was certainly not Sorry it took the Risk, because

it soon had a Monopoly on indoor sports.

NERF really took off when the football version was introduced in 1972. Made of molded foam, the football is denser than the original NERF, but it still spurs mom's favorite mirror NERF footballs are the largest-selling football of any kind in the U.S., and all NERF seems combined since the sales of the king of games, Monopoly. NERF's Bully-to-Bowdwalk success story has come to include basketballs, soccer balls, airplanes, rockets, spacemen, flying discs and NERFOOP, a miniature basketball-and-plastic-basket set that the NBA might want to look into for Darryl Dawkins.

A few professional athletes are counted among NERF's millions of devotees. Third Baseman Ken Reitz of the St. Louis Cardinals discovered the benefits of NERF in 1977. He would bring his then-teammates Pete Falcone and Hector Cruz over to his new house for a friendly game of NERF ball in the basement. Reitz credited the NERF practice with correcting his swing and helping him break out of an early-season slump. In May of that year he hit .366 with six home runs and 23 RBIs and was named the National League Player of the Month. Last year, though, Reitz temporarily lost the true spirit of NERF, and during a long plane delay he took part in busing up an airport lounge. Reitz apologized for his aberrant behavior. If only he had taken his NERF ball with him.

NERF has its serious side, too. The U.S. Air Force Tactical Air Command hangs NERF planes head high from the ceilings at its bases to serve as ever-present reminders to pilots to be wary of smaller, slower-moving aircraft. TAC officials say that the NERF planes can claim some small credit for the more than 40,000 collision-free flying hours that F-15 fighter planes have accumulated in the last three years. At 97¢ apiece, they're a bargain in protecting the \$15 million aircraft and their pilots.

Electronic bugging devices implanted free of charge in NERF balls by the Bell Telephone Pioneers of America have helped the blind to enjoy sports. NERFs can be found in physical therapy departments of medical centers throughout the country. NERFs played an important role in the Manhattan Special Olympics program by allowing the mentally retarded to have fun and gain confidence through success in sports. In addition, more than 600 recreation departments across the nation now conduct NERF Future Stars programs for youngsters. As part of the 10th-birthday celebration, there was a Big Future Stars competition and party in Chicago on Dec. 15, to be followed by one in New York on Jan. 12 and another in Los Angeles come March.

And to think it all started with the wrong idea. Parker Brothers never has gotten around to making an indoor volleyball game.

Happy NERFday.

END



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SCORECARD

Edited by MYRA GELBAND

PUNISHING THE PUGILISTS

Two weeks ago, after a 4-3 victory by the Boston Bruins over the New York Rangers in Madison Square Garden, tempers flared between the two teams. Spectators began to throw debris and scream at the Boston players, and one particularly rabid Ranger fan punched Bruin Stan Jonathan, who had scored the winning goal, then grabbed Jonathan's stick and began to wave it at the Bruins. In an instant several Boston players rushed into the stands to have it out with the fans. The ugly and frightening scene lasted more than 15 minutes.

There long have been outcries against the violent brawling that characterizes play in the NHL. It is bad enough that players attack each other during games, but the invasion of the stands is intolerable. And spectators must not be allowed to harm the players.

As for fighting, putting players in a penalty box is obviously not doing the job of preventing fights that are not only bad in themselves but also have the side effect of creating a combative atmosphere among fans.

One hockey expert, who loves and cares about the game, has suggested that any player who drops his gloves and engages in a fight be automatically expelled for the rest of that game and suspended for the next. A second fight would draw another expulsion and a two-game suspension; a third fight, expulsion and a three-game suspension. Such a carryover penalty would not only discourage players from fistfuffs but also might quiet down fans, who would not encourage their favorites to fight, lest they be suspended. It may not be the ultimate solution, but it's the best one we've heard.

HEIDEN SEES

The speed-skating oval at the Wisconsin State Fairgrounds in West Allis, just outside Milwaukee, is not one of the world's great sports venues. It is in a seedy setting, next to a superhighway with a cement plant looming nearby. And, since

the rink was opened in 1966, a world record had never been set there, a startling fact considering that it has been home ice for such American skating stars as Olympic medalists Terry McDermott, Anne Henning, Sbeila Young, Dianne Holm, Peter Mueller and Leah Posolos Mueller, to say nothing of the Heidens, Beth and her incomparable brother, Eric, holder of every men's world championship.

The reason for the absence of records is that though the rink is adequately constructed, it is located in an area of industrial pollution. This tends to make the ice coarser. Prevailing winds at West Allis are also strong.

But last weekend there was at last a record-breaking performance at West Allis. Eric Heiden, 21, flashed through a stunning 1,000-meter race at the Olympic Trials in 1:14.37, which was .62 second faster than the world record he set on the fast ice at the Savalan rink in Norway. An appreciative crowd of 3,000, the largest ever at a West Allis event, stood and applauded. Other speed skaters were astonished. Even Heiden himself was impressed. "I guess it was just a perfect set of conditions," he said, "and it psyched me up more than usual. I wish it counted officially."

Doesn't count officially? Well, there was confusion about whether or not the International Skating Union, which governs speed skating, would recognize the record. Usually the ISU will sanction only records set at international competitions. It will, however, stand as an American record, probably for at least a quarter century.

ROMAN NUMERALS

Who is the highest-paid athlete of all time? Muhammad Ali? Arnold Palmer? Maybe Nolan Ryan? Or Bjorn Borg? Or Laffie Pincay Jr.? How about Gaius Apuleius Diocles?

Diocles was a Spanish-born Roman charioteer, the Billy Haughton of his time, who from 122 to 146 A.D. won 1,462 of the 4,257 chariot races he en-

tered. In those 24 years Diocles earned more than 35 million sesterces. Most of those winnings probably came from the treasuries of the emperors Hadrian (117-138) and Antoninus Pius (138-161), who were in power during Diocles' career.

A sesterce, of course, was worth one quarter of a denarius, another ancient Roman coin, and there is no reliable way to determine what the value of either would be in modern currency. But consider that during a period of rampant inflation some 150 years after Diocles' heyday, the emperor Diocletian imposed a wage freeze dictating that stonemasons be paid no more than 200 sesterces per day, camel drivers and water bearers 100 and shepherds 80 sesterces. That makes



Diocles' pre-inflation 4,000 a day even more impressive.

This information comes courtesy of David Matz, who culled it from Latin inscriptions on stone plaques that are now in Roman museums. An ancient-history teacher at the Breck School in Minneapolis, Matz' hobby is ancient athletics, a subject he says has been unjustly neglected. "Most people studying ancient civilizations are not very interested in sports," says Matz, who also is an assistant coach for girls' softball and boys' football at Breck.

According to the 32-year-old Matz, who has a Ph.D. in Latin from the University of Minnesota, chariot racing was

continued

the No. 1 spectator sport in Rome, which boasted the famous Circus Maximus racecourse. There were up to 12 chariots in each race, which usually covered seven laps, or about six miles. Even if Diocletian got to keep only a small part of his earnings after sharing them with the owners of the horses, he was still among Rome's wealthiest citizens. And he didn't even have an agent.

THE SCANDAL SPREADS

At the time of our last report on the scandal involving athletes who received bogus credits from summer extension courses offered by Rocky Mountain College and Ottawa University (SI, Dec. 24), only the football teams at Arizona State and the football and basketball teams at New Mexico had been forced to forfeit games because they had used ineligible players. Although three football players from Oregon and a basketball player from Utah had been enrolled in the Ottawa course, neither of those schools, after investigating the facts, had found any wrongdoing.

During Christmas week it was learned that neither Rock Richmond nor Mike Honeycutt, Oregon players who received credit for the course, had attended classes or done any work. Furthermore, freshman Paul Perez had not only been enrolled in the Ottawa course but, along with freshman Paul Sanborn, had also received credit for such other courses as Intermediate Weight Lifting and Recreation Field Work, taught at Los Angeles Valley Community College.

In the wake of these revelations, Oregon Assistant Football Coach John Becker, the man who apparently arranged the credits from Ottawa and L.A. Valley, resigned. It turned out that Becker had formerly been head coach at L.A. Valley and had worked in the physical education department there with Earle P. Durely, the instructor for the Ottawa course, Current Problems and Principles in Coaching Athletics. Before that, Becker and Durely had been colleagues on the New Mexico football staff. (Two other Oregon assistant coaches, Bob McCray and Andy Christoff, are also former members of the New Mexico staff.) Oregon Coach Rich Brooks says that Durely told him that Durely had arranged for the players to receive the credits because of his friendship with Becker.

As a result, Oregon, 6-5 in football this season, will probably forfeit its games, the second Pac-10 school—Arizona State

was the first—to do so. But not the last. After Oregon State discovered that one of its players, Leroy Edwards, had been in the Ottawa course, it did further checking and found a phony grade from a Florida junior college on Edwards' record. Thus Oregon State, which had seen its record improve from 1-10 to 4-7 after "forfeit" wins over New Mexico, Arizona State and San Jose State, may find itself with a record of 0-11.

Meanwhile Utah, which had similarly exonerated basketball player Danny Vraines who had taken the Ottawa course by correspondence, reversed itself and declared Vraines ineligible for the full quarter. As a result, the Utes may have to forfeit five basketball victories.

NEW MATH

Everyone knows that sports fans love numbers. What would baseball be without ERAs, RBIs, batting averages and strikeout totals, or football without yards per carry, pass-completion percentages and punting averages? Now golf, which has always been dignified by its paucity of statistics, has succumbed to the pressure of the numbers game.

The PGA tour has announced that this year it will keep round-by-round and cumulative statistics in eight categories. Weekly figures on driving distance, driving accuracy, birdie percentage, eagle and birdie leaders, money earned, scoring average and the inevitable acronym, GIR, or greens in regulation, will be issued for all tour players.

Commissioner Deane Beman says the move is in response to spectator interest. "A great many fans have asked questions about the best player in this or that particular aspect of the game," he explains, "but other than the opinions of the player's peers, there has been no authoritative source for such information."

Individual statistics serve a valuable purpose in sports such as baseball or football, in which a team's success or lack of it often overshadows the performances of specific players. But golf is a game of individuals, and a player's proficiency can easily be judged by how he finishes in a tournament. The invention of new statistical categories seems superfluous, a clutter to a sport heretofore admired for its numerical simplicity.

SWEET CHARITY

Christmas, it seems, 'tis the season to be promotional. During halftime of a game

between the Knicks and the Clippers at San Diego, some 50 fans were invited to throw lemon meringue pies at a local TV sportscaster, Ted Leitner, who was standing under the east basket of the San Diego Sports Arena. Although the floor was covered with a protective cloth, gooey pie filling oozed onto the court as far from the hoop as the three-point line. A cleanup crew further gummed up matters by pouring resin on top of the sticky mess. It took almost an hour to clean the floor under what was the Knicks' basket for the second half, and New York Coach Red Holzman filed a protest of the game (which he later dropped, although the Knicks lost 128-118), claiming the court was too slippery to play on safely.

Steve Lees, the Clippers' director of sales promotions, dreamed up the pie throw, which proved to be as much of a fiasco as one of the Clippers' earlier halftime shows that involved a half-naked comedian who performed some X-rated material. Lees has abandoned a planned promotion that was to have fans dive for \$100 bills in a tank of gelatin.

In Bridgeport, Conn., Bob Beslove, who handles publicity for the Bridgeport Jai Alai fronton, offered free admission one evening to anyone dressed up as Santa Claus. Unfortunately, a snowstorm forced cancellation of that evening's program. But Santa-suited Frank Mainelli didn't hear of the postponement until he arrived at the fronton, having traveled 20 miles through the snow. "I can't repeat his exact words to me," said Beslove, "but he didn't say 'Ho, ho, ho.'"

One of the nicest spirit-of-Christmas promotions took place at Bowling Green (Ohio) State University. With the students away for the holidays and a basketball game scheduled for Dec. 15 against Northwestern State University of Louisiana, the athletic department invited fans to attend at no charge if they brought a usable toy or a can of food. More than 2,000 people came with 1,500 cans of food and 600 toys, which were given to the needy by local charities.

As with all things, some ideas are better than others.

THEY SAID IT

● Peter Salzberg, University of Vermont basketball coach, after three Southwest Conference officials assessed 56 fouls during Vermont's 98-66 loss at Texas A&M: "They called fouls like they were getting a commission."

END



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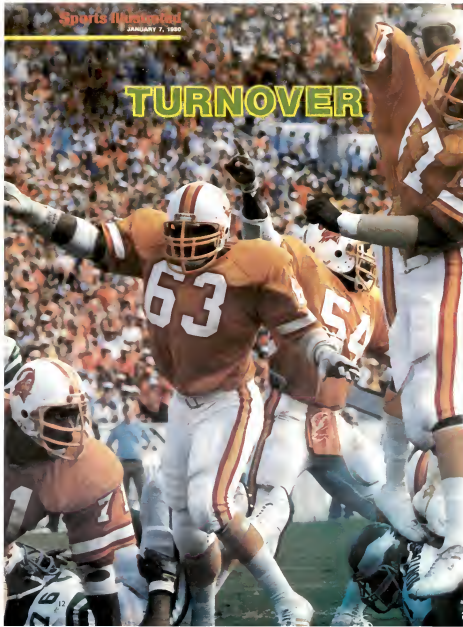
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Sports Illustrated

JANUARY 7, 1990

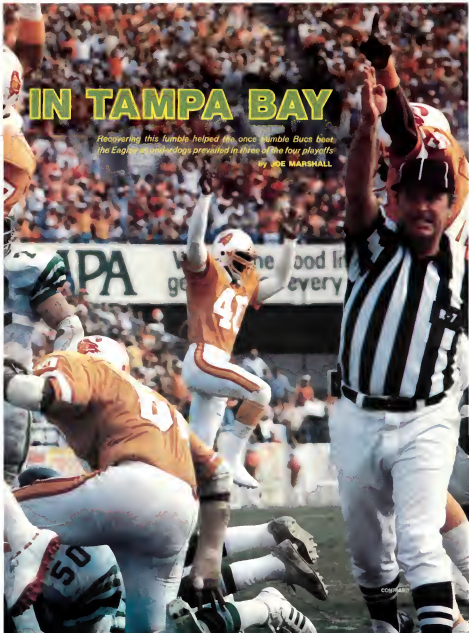
TURNOVER



IN TAMPA BAY

Recovering this fumble helped the once humble Bucs beat the Eagles as underdogs prevailed in three of the four playoffs

by JOE MARSHALL



Don't look now, America, but the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, age 4, are one win away from the Super Bowl. That's right, the Buccaneers, the team that spent most of its first two years one win shy of one win. The Bucs' 24-17 victory over Philadelphia Saturday in Tampa was sweet vindication for Coach John McKay, who must be admired for not sticking his tongue out at the world and shouting, "I told you so."

McKay had suffered the slings and arrows of outraged fans, not to mention jealous peers, ever since he arrived in Tampa from the campus of Southern California four years ago with a contract reportedly worth \$1.5 million and a disdain for the "complexities" of the pro game. Of course, McKay didn't help his cause by losing his first 26 games. Or by arrogantly insisting, even at 0-26, that five years was all it would take to build a contender. Everyone was laughing at McKay. Now McKay is laughing at everybody. The Bucs are not only in the NFC championship game, but they are also there one year ahead of schedule.

Against the Eagles, Tampa Bay took the opening kickoff and, running a lot of that old USC Student Body Right, used up more than 9½ minutes in driving 80 yards in 18 plays for a touchdown. Ricky Bell, who played for McKay at USC, carried 10 times for 44 yards in the drive, going four yards around right end for the score. "It's very important in any game if you can start like that," McKay said. "It's what you've worked on in practice, and when you're successful, the players have a little bit more faith in your plan." The Bucs needed that faith; in their last three regular-season games they had scored just 10 points.

Philadelphia Coach Dick Vermeil expected that his team would have trouble moving the ball against the Bucs, who had yielded the fewest points and fewest yards in the league. But Vermeil never dreamed that the Bucs would manhandle the Eagles at will. On Philadelphia's second offensive play, Ron Jaworski flipped a short pass into the left flat to Fullback Leroy Harris, who was immediately gang-tackled. Unnecessary roughing was

called—not on an individual but on the Buc defense. The Eagles got the message. Before the day was over, Philadelphia receivers had dropped 10 passes.

The Bucs' defensive strategy was keyed to two Eagles, Running Back Wilbert Montgomery and 6' 8" Wide Receiver Harold Carmichael. Whenever Montgomery got the ball, he found himself surrounded by Bucs. "We gambled a little on the running plays," said Defensive End Lee Roy Selmon, "because we knew Montgomery would get the ball most of the time." In the first half Montgomery gained just four yards on six carries, and Carmichael did not catch a pass.

In the meantime, Tampa Bay's Neil O'Donoghue kicked a 40-yard field goal, and Bell—who was to gain 142 yards while carrying a playoff-record 38 times, 20 more than all the Eagles combined—scored another touchdown over the right side, and Tampa Bay seemed set to take a 17-0 lead to the locker room. But with less than two minutes to play, McKay unparadoxically called for a pass. Not content with accomplishing a five-year plan

Quarterback Doug Williams, pitching to Jerry Eckwood, justified Coach John McKay's faith in him and silenced his critics by leading Tampa Bay to victory.



in four, McKay apparently wanted to end an hour-long game in 30 minutes. Quarterback Doug Williams threw high to Jerry Eckwood, who tipped the ball to Eagle Linebacker Jerry Robinson. Robinson returned the interception 37 yards to the Tampa Bay 11, and Jaworski passed to Charlie Smith for a touchdown to cut the Bucs' lead to 17-7. When Philadelphia took the second-half kick-off and came away with three points on a 42-yard Tony Franklin field goal, the Eagles trailed by just a touchdown.

Williams threw a bullet into the end zone to Jimmie Giles for a 24-10 Buc lead 7:52 into the fourth quarter, and after that Tampa Bay, though turned by a 37-yard Jaworski-to-Carmichael touchdown, was essentially in charge.

Following the game McKay was typically impassive, as unflappable in success as he had been in failure. He refused to gloat. Not that he needed to. The Bucs had proved what he had insisted all along—that he knows how to build a winning team. McKay had succeeded by doing it his way, which meant making gutsy, if frequently unpopular, personnel decisions. The move that created the biggest furor was McKay's decision to draft Bell instead of Heisman Trophy winner Tony Dorsett in 1977. While Dorsett was rattling off back-to-back 1,000-yard seasons and helping lead the Cowboys to consecutive Super Bowls, Bell was struggling with a series of injuries. Snorts McKay, "That first year the linemen should have earned the ball and Ricky should have blocked, because he always got to the hole first."

This year Bell averaged just 58 yards for his first six games, but in the last 10 he gained 915 yards and had five 100-yard games. For the season he finished with 1,263 yards, 156 more than Dorsett. What's more, he's the kind of quiet, positive force that Dallas Coach Tom Landry wishes Dorsett would be.

When Bell arrived in Tampa, he noticed that the losing was getting to McKay, even if McKay tried not to show it. "He was always so calm at USC," says Bell, who was shocked one day when McKay angrily slammed his fist into a blackboard and broke a bone in his hand. McKay, of course, never admitted that he had hurt the hand. "The pressure I was under wasn't anything compared to what the coach was going through," says Bell, who was regularly booed in his first



Lee Roy Selmon nabs at the beleaguered Ron Jaworski from every which way, even from above.

two years in Tampa. "How could I feel sorry for myself? I figured if he could get through it, I sure could."

Bell's poor showing in 1977 put pressure on McKay to draft another Heisman winner, Earl Campbell, in 1978. Instead, McKay traded the No. 1 pick in the draft to Houston for an unknown tight end (Giles) and four draft choices, one of which he used to select Williams. McKay made Williams a starter in the first game of his first year and has stuck with him ever since. Williams has such a powerful arm that he forgets to follow through with his body and constantly overthrows his receivers, which helps explain his 41.8% pass-completion average. Around Tampa Bay the joke is that Williams is the only person capable of overthrowing the Ayatollah.

Late this season, when Williams threw nine interceptions in two consecutive losses, McKay was under media and fan pressure to bench him for the final game, which the Bucs had to win to be champions of the NFC Central and gain the playoffs. McKay did not succumb, and Williams led the Bucs to victory. "If we don't win with Doug Williams, we'll have to start all over," said McKay. "I don't intend to start all over. I'm already the oldest coach in the league."

McKay has a reputation for being distant with his players, but Williams feels very close to him. "There are not too many people who would have let me play that last game against Kansas City," he says. "That's why Coach McKay has been a winner all his life. He sticks with what he believes in."

CONTINUED



With San Diego leading 7-0 in the first quarter, Houston's Vernon Perry helps turn the game around by blocking Mike Wood's field-goal attempt from the 16.

NFL PLAYOFFS continued

THE STOLEN SIGNALS CAPER

by Paul Zimmerman

Question: What do you do when your best runner, passer and catcher are out of action because of injuries?

Answer: You play defense and try to win that way.

Some joke, huh? The Houston Oilers are minus Earl Campbell and Dan Pastorini and, for most of the game, Kenny Burroughs, and now they're going to win it on defense? Against the San Diego Chargers, the passngest team in football, with a quarterback who's thrown for more yards in a single season than anyone in history?

So, what are the Oilers going to do, steal the Chargers' signals or something?

Exactly.

On Saturday afternoon in San Diego the Oilers stole 'em clean and upset the Chargers 17-14 to reach the AFC championship game. It happened this way. Charger Quarterback Dan Fouts does not

call his own plays; they are called by Offensive Coordinator Joe Gibbs, who works from a booth in the press box. Gibbs phones the plays down to the sidelines, to Head Coach Don Coryell and his first lieutenant, Jim Hanifan. They confer, and Hanifan signals the play in to Fouts. Hand signals, baseball signals—you know, touch flesh, touch cloth, flash one, flash two, fold arms and go.

Fouts does not believe in changing the coaches' plays too frequently. Why should he? Those signals, teamed with his good right arm, gave the Chargers a 12-4 record and almost 2½ miles in the air this season. "If you start changing things, you're putting all your eggs in one basket," Fouts says. "Then if the new play doesn't work, it's demoralizing."

The only problem Saturday was that Eddie Biles broke the Chargers' code. Eddie Biles is the tricky little chap who

coaches the Oiler defense. He watches for small tips, for giveaways. A few years ago, for instance, he discovered that when Cincinnati Tight End Bob Trumpy took one kind of stance, he was going to block down on the defensive end, and when he took a different one, he was going to release inside for a pass. It never failed.

Now Biles had figured out the Chargers signals. So, as Hanifan flashed the plays to Fouts, Wade Phillips, the Oilers' defensive line coach and son of Head Coach Bum Phillips, would train his binoculars on Hanifan from the press box and relay the Chargers' plays to Biles on the sidelines. Biles then would flash them to Middle Linebacker Gregg Bingham, who called the defenses on the field.

It was clear that the Oilers had Fouts' number. They intercepted him five times. The Oilers flowed to the ball. Passes that normally would have been harmless incompletions turned into interceptions. Strong Safety Vernon Perry, a rookie from the Canadian league, picked off four, three of them on double coverage.

Fouts seemed to be throwing into double coverage most of the day. People who

have been around the Chargers for years said they had never seen him throw into so much double coverage. How could he help it? It's easy to double-cover when you know where the ball is going.

The Oilers' offense was a heroic operation, with Campbell's sub, Rob Carpenter, playing on a badly sprained left ankle. Houston gutted it out. Gifford Nielsen, the young quarterback who filled in for Pastorini, threw just enough short stuff to keep things moving, and the makeshift offense got two touchdowns and a field goal. But the touchdowns were set up by interceptions in San Diego territory. Another interception killed a San Diego drive on the Houston 18 in the first quarter; another one stopped the Chargers on the Oilers' 32 with 3:18 left; and still another—the final one—snuffed out the Chargers in the game's dying seconds.

"O.K., so you know their plays," said Bingham, "but you still have to tackle the guy or make the interception, don't you?"

Well, yes, but it gives you a decided advantage, to say nothing of a sense of security, when you know what's coming.

"Everybody didn't know," Bingham said. "I was the only one who knew. It just told me what defense to put us into. It's not the kind of thing you want everybody knowing, or pretty soon the Chargers are going to figure out what's happening. My job was to put us into the right defense—I guess you'd say the perfect defense."

And how about Fouts? Did he smell a rat? In the San Diego locker room a disconsolate Fouts said mistakes were what beat the Chargers. "At times we played like ourselves, but we made too many mistakes," he said. "We should have taken real control. Just too many mistakes."

"Fouts changed the play twice, and once it hurt us," Bingham said. "It was in the first quarter when he hit their second tight end deep on a play-action pass. It set up their touchdown. That was one time. I don't remember the second."

Still, not a bad percentage—two out of 68 snaps.

"Let's face it, the information we had was golden—just golden," Bingham said. "It's part of the game, these in-house secrets. It wasn't like someone walked in and stole something lying on a desk. It took a lot of brainwork on Coach Biles' part to figure things out the way he did. The guy's a genius. I've never seen this



After making the second of his four pass interceptions, Perry deftly laterals the ball to Mike Ruckelsholt.

happen before. A lot of times information like this can hurt you. Guys start thinking too much. But today it was just golden."

Coryell seemed a little shaken when it was suggested to him that some signal-stealing had gone on. "I find it hard to believe Houston would do that," Coryell said. "I don't want to start making excuses. But if they did it? Well, there's no way we could have gotten them to give the information back to us."

Neither Biles nor Bum Phillips would discuss the matter. They had coached a patched-up, eight-point underdog into the AFC championship, a team that had to rely on guys like Boobie Clark and Guido Merzens. They preferred to talk about the ball hawking of Perry and Carpenter's gutsy performance. And very few Oilers could take a thing like signal-stealing seriously.

"Their formations dictated our coverages," said Houston cornerback J. C. Wilson, who had the only interception that wasn't made by Perry, the one that set up touchdown No. 2, the winning score—a short Nielsen pass to Mike Renfro that Renfro turned into a 47-yard play

in the third quarter. "They try to mix you up, and you have to stay with 'em."

But a few of the Chargers had an inkling that something was up.

"I've often wondered why it wasn't done before," said one San Diego player. "Stealing signals isn't that hard to do. People study films of your games. Why can't they study films of your signals?"

But let's hear it for the Oilers' walking wounded, for Carpenter, who kept driving for tough yards, who took one horrendous three-way shot in the second quarter and had to crawl off the field. "I got hit on my side," Carpenter said. On Wednesday he had tripped over a blocking dummy in practice and twisted an ankle. When the Oilers' bus arrived at the hotel Friday, he was on crutches. The night of the long needle? Carpenter says no, no painkiller was administered.

"I played in pain," he said. "A lot of us did."

Well, Pastorini and Campbell and Burrough all figure to be back next week for the Steelers. And as for stealing signals—forget it. Terry Bradshaw's one of those old-fashioned quarterbacks who calls his own plays.

CONTINUED

THE RAMS HORN IN ON A DYNASTY

by Dan Jenkins

In the past few weeks there have been moments in the huddle of the Los Angeles Rams when the inexperienced quarterback, Vince Ferragamo, has mumbled something or other and Dennis Harrah, the veteran guard, has been compelled to say, "Vince, we don't even have a play like that." Ferragamo would apologize and speak in more familiar terms. Well, that was then. Last Sunday in cold, gray Dallas, all Ferragamo did was whip "America's team," the heavily favored Cowboys, by the score of 21-19 and take the often maligned, frequently defeated Rams into the championship game of the National Conference against Tampa Bay.

Until six games ago Ferragamo was an understudy to Pat Haden. Vince got his chance when Haden broke a thumb, and even after that he was benched a couple of times in favor of the more experienced Bob Lee. But nobody ever said Ferragamo didn't have an arm and plenty of ability. Coach Ray Malavasi kept saying it, after apologizing to Vince for taking him out of games. Ferragamo had been a widely sought college prospect, one who used to make John McKay wipe his chin at the thought of recruiting him for USC. But Vince went to Cal, and then left for Nebraska.

Now Ferragamo will also face the same coach, McKay, who once labeled him the best quarterback prospect in the solar system. It surely boggles many minds to consider that Los Angeles and Tampa Bay will be playing to see who goes to the Super Bowl, but no doubt the most stupefied people of all must be the Cowboys.

In essence, Ferragamo did to the Dallas boys what Dallas, and mainly Roger Staubach, has had a habit of doing to other teams. Ferragamo beat the Cowboys in the dying moments of a wild and weird game by throwing his third touchdown pass of the afternoon, a 50-yarder



L.A.'s Ron Smith outleaps Randy Hughes for Ferragamo's 43-yard TD lob just before the half...

to Billy Waddy, with exactly 2.06 to play.

Maybe Ferragamo is developing a thing about clocks. With precisely three seconds left before the end of the first half, he threw a 43-yard touchdown pass to Ron Smith. Actually, on that one more credit was due Smith than Ferragamo, because Smith, a second-year man from San Diego State, made a leaping, story-book catch in the Dallas end zone after a midair wrestling match with Safety Randy Hughes, the substitute for the long lost and sorely missed Charlie Waters. That Smith could have come down with the football was simply not to be believed. That play gave Los Angeles a 14-5 lead.

Ferragamo figured in almost everything that happened. In the first quarter he had retreated into his end zone and fallen down, giving up a safety to the Cowboys. For a while it looked as if two points might be all of the scoring for the day, because neither team could generate any kind of offense. One reason Dallas wasn't doing much was L.A.'s funny "nickel-7" defense, a thing concocted by Defensive Coordinator Bud Carson. Against Staubach and the shotgun formation the Rams sent in seven defensive backs, and they appeared to be everywhere at once.

With Staubach generating only a field goal in the first half, Ferragamo recovered from his safety and capped a 92-yard second-quarter drive with the first touchdown of the game. It came on a 32-yard pass to Wendell Tyler, who had gotten isolated on Linebacker D. D. Lewis. This was the same Tyler who launched the drive with a 35-yard jaunt around the left side of the Dallas defense, where Too Tall Jones, Charlie Waters and Hollywood Henderson used to roam.

Dallas got back in the game in the third quarter with a touchdown that resulted from two things: 1) Staubach looking a little more like himself, like the man who led the NFL in passing in 1979, and 2) a 14-yard pass interference penalty on the Rams' Jim Youngblood, who either did or did not interfere with Tony Dorsett. Youngblood's thoughts about the penalty were not kept to himself; he kicked things and hollered. Dorsett may have been play-acting, but it worked. Dallas had the ball at the Rams' one-yard line, and Ron Springs lunged over. Now it was 14-12 Rams, but that flake fellow Momentum seemed to have switched sides.

Ferragamo throws the occasional bad ball. One of them found Cliff Harris'

stomach late in the third quarter, and the interception got Dallas moving to the touchdown that put the Cowboys ahead 19-14. With a couple of passes and a good run by Dorsett, Dallas worked its way to a third-and-two near the Rams' goal. On that play, Dorsett went in motion and Roger dropped back, suddenly stopped and zipped a shot over the middle to Jay Saldi, who was so open he might have been humming.

Afterward, the Rams came back with a ground game featuring Tyler and Cullen Bryant, driving from their own 23 to the Dallas 32. But, on fourth down, after one official called interference on Cliff Harris and another overruled him, the game appeared to be over.

Not to Ferragamo. With the clock approaching the two-minute warning and the ball at midfield, Vince had a discussion with himself in the huddle. A play had been suggested from the sideline, but Ferragamo said, "Aw, let's go with the other one." The other one was the winning touchdown pass, 60-X Corner.

"Waddy went out and around the zone," Ferragamo said. "They were in a deep zone and Cliff Harris was reading my eyes. I fooled him."

Billy Waddy almost didn't go "out and around" far enough. Mike Hegman, the Dallas linebacker who replaced Henderson, managed to scrape some paint off the ball while it was in the air, but did not impede its flight. The ball sailed perfectly into Waddy's arms at the Dallas 27, and he outran everyone to the end zone.

The Cowboys had a chance after the following kickoff to do that thing Staubach did to the Washington Redskins two weeks before, that thing he has done to a lot of opponents over the years: produce a game-winning score in the final two minutes. But after Dorsett ran for 12 yards to the Dallas 33, the Cowboys did nothing. Their season ended with Staubach throwing incomplete passes to Tony Hill, throwing to Guard Herb Scott, an ineligible receiver, and throwing over Drew Pearson's head.

In many ways that last series summed up the bizarre year it had been for "America's team." It began for the Cowboys when they lost, for one reason or another, three of their crowd-pleasers—Jones, Waters and Henderson.

The weird road the Cowboys traveled started taking odd twists and turns in the

continued



...and though Smith lands on his head he holds onto the ball, much to the dismay of Aaron Kyle.

early summer when Too Tall shocked his teammates by announcing he was giving up football for prizefighting. Lee skating they might have believed. This left Tom Landry without a pass rush on one side of the line until he pecked up the retired John Dutton, who slowly came around. As the Cowboys suffered a midseason sag, losing four of five games, the absent Too Tall became increasingly immortal. If Dallas loses one more game, somebody said, Too Tall can go straight to the Hall of Fame in Canton, Ohio.

Cowboy-watchers recognized Waters as the biggest loss. He tore a ligament in his right knee in an exhibition game. This not only took away the best strong safety in the league, but it also sidelined a guy who hollered out the defensive signals. The handsome Charlie had a good year, anyhow. He posed for a pinup poster, and it has outsold Farrah and the Cheerleaders around Dallas. He is using the money to finance his wife's first disco album. Charlie's wife, Rosie Holotik, is a singer-actress who once starred in a film titled *Horror High*, that also featured such notable actors as Craig Morton, Mean Joe Greene and D. D. Lewis. It still plays on some late-night TV sets under the new title of *The Twisted Brain*, which some Cowboy players say is an appropriate name for anyone who invested in the production in the first place.

Hughes, another handsome young man, replaced Waters and did O.K. until he dislocated a shoulder three weeks ago against Philadelphia. Before the Rams game there were two opinions about whether Hughes would be ready to play. Landry said he was ready; Hughes said, "I want to play, but I'm no fool." Landry was right.

It's such statements that ultimately get players traded from Dallas. Henderson used to talk a lot, and finally he talked too much, so smack in the middle of the season he found himself "retired." Hegman stepped in to replace him. So the Cowboys had three not-so-household words in their defense—Dutton, Hughes and Hegman.

And now America is without a team, and the NFC is going to send a strange ball club to Super Bowl XIV: either Tampa Bay, with six losses and a quarterback, Doug Williams, who finished 27th on a list of 28 in statistics, or Los Angeles, with seven losses and a quarterback who often has trouble remembering anything but 60-X Corner.

NOT EVERY UNDERDOG HAD HIS DAY

by Ron Reid

Two days before Pittsburgh routed the Miami Dolphins, Lynn Swann was asked why the Steelers always seem to perform so superbly in playoff games. "I just think this team has pressure ball-players," Swann said. "There's something about the character of most of our guys that makes them get up even more for a big game. In a playoff game, that's where you find emotional intensity—and we respond to that."

Memorable big-game heroics have been provided by Franco Harris, the NFL's ultimate leading ground-gainer in postseason play; by Terry Bradshaw, the MVP of Super Bowl XIII; and by Swann himself, the MVP of Super Bowl X. But while the big names performed creditably, as usual, on Sunday at Three Rivers Stadium, it was the unsung members of the Pittsburgh offensive line who got most of the news.

"Our offensive line manhandled Miami's three-man line," said Bradshaw. He had particular praise for 6' 5", 244-pound Left Tackle Ted Petersen, who started for ailing All-Pro Jon Kolb, and 6' 1", 260-pound Right Guard Steve Courson, who filled in through much of the day for nine-year veteran Gerry Mullins.

Petersen and Courson opened holes for Harris and Sidney Thornton by bowling over Dolphin linemen or blocking down on the linebackers, and they pass-protected so ferociously that Bradshaw could have released the ball while observing his receivers run their routes.

Petersen and Courson dominated the scrumline line as Pittsburgh scored a touchdown the first three times it had the ball. The Steelers had a 20-0 lead after 14:09, and that eliminated the biggest worry for Mean Joe Greene and the other members of the defense.

"The big key to this game is we got to stop [Larry] Csonka and their running game," Greene had said. "We think Csonka is the catalyst. He gets them fired up and makes things work. If we stop Csonka, we stop their running game, and



Miami neglects to cover Swann, and he scores.

then we force them into passing situations we can control."

Forced into playing catch-up after Thornton had scored on a one-yard smash and Bradshaw had connected on touchdown passes to John Stallworth and Swann, the Dolphins were never able to use Csonka or any other running back effectively. Miami, which has lost its last three playoff games, finished with a miserable 25 yards on 22 rushes, 18 of those yards coming in the fourth quarter, and on the short end of a 34-14 score.

By winning, the Steelers qualified for their sixth AFC championship game in the last eight years; they have won three of their five title games, including last year's 34-5 romp over the Oilers. Also, the Miami triumph was the Steelers' ninth without a loss this season at Three Rivers Stadium, where they have won 23 of their last 24 games and 68 of 81 overall. And, yes, the Steelers will be at home when they play Houston for the AFC title and a trip to Pasadena for Super Bowl XIV.

Against Miami, the performances of



Petersen and Courson were matched on the Steeler defensive unit by Free Safety J. T. Thomas and Linebacker Dirt Winston, who filled in for Mike Wagner and Jack Ham, respectively, with no falloff in efficiency. It may be too early to hail the Steelers as certain champions of Super Bowl XIV, but Coach Chuck Noll certainly has no dearth of talent.

Having lost Ham (ankle, out until next season), Kolb (shoulder) and Wagner (hamstrings) before the game, and Swann (hamstrings) before the half, Pittsburgh played most of the way without the four All-Pros. Yet the Steelers won with ease. Bradshaw completed 21 of 31 passes for 230 yards and the two touchdowns. Stallworth, Bradshaw's primary target this season, caught six passes for 86 yards, and his 17-yard touchdown reception was something special.

Taking Bradshaw's pass at the six, directly in front of the goalpost, Stallworth broke quickly to his left, beat four tacklers, then stiff-armed Linebacker Earnest Rhone and tiptoed just inside the sideline for the last few yards.

Harris finished as the leading rusher for the 12th time in his 15 postseason games, getting 83 yards and scoring on a five-yard smash in the final quarter.

"Houston's game at San Diego yesterday showed us a lot of class," said Harris. "The Oilers were hurt and had some of their great players out, so they had to suck it up and get the job done. We feel we're that same kind of team."

In the first five games of the season, when the Steelers were trying to overcome a succession of injuries to their offensive linemen, and Petersen and Courson had yet to reach the performance level they achieved against Miami, Harris rushed for only 189 yards. But as skeptics began to murmur that maybe age had caught up with the 29-year-old Harris, he finished the year with 1,186 yards and moved up to No. 4 on the alltime NFL rushing list.

"I think what makes Franco run is personal pride," said Rocky Bleier, who also scored a touchdown against Miami. "He feels badly if he has a bad game, and those stories at the start of the year—that he was washed up—they got to him, you know."

Or as Lynn Swann might have put it, "Franco responded."

As usual, the rest of the Steelers did likewise, and when that happens, any upset virus going around takes a terrible toweeling. END

The Steeler ground game ripped the Dolphins' three man line for 159 yards as blockers like Sam Davis cleared wide swaths for runners like Sidney Thornton.



NOW IT'S BOMBS AWAY IN THE NBA

Traditionalists may blanch, but pro basketball is going downtown with the three-point shot. The Celtics especially have fired shots heard round the NBA world, but most teams have yet to exploit the three-pointer fully **by BRUCE NEWMAN**



For years the men who run the NBA had been looking for an ingenious follow-up to the league's masterstroke of the decade—the invention of the “loose ball foul” in 1970, a piece of work that basketball scholars are still studying for a sign that it was conceived by some form of intelligent life. When the league's board of governors convened last June on lovely Amelia Island (just off the coast of Florida, not far from Veronica Lake), the owners finally did it. By a vote of 15-7 they adopted a rule for a one-year trial that—shades of the scorned ABA!—gives three points for extra-long field goals. “I think that I shall never see a thing more lovely than a three,” said Commissioner Larry O'Brien, gaveling the meetings to a close.

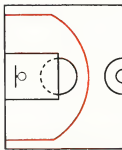
Clearly, the idea of bestowing an additional point for throwing up a shot that violates long-standing coaching precepts, had its detractors. Golden State owner Franklin Mieuli was so disgusted he stalked out of the meeting, saying that if the vote was final he would never attend another owners' meeting.

“Changing the two-point basket is immoral,” Mieuli said at the time. “The ABA had it and folded. What have we done except hurt ourselves? We have separated ourselves from the main body of basketball by tampering with a game that has lasted for 90 years. We have paid too high a price. I could even accept raising the basket, which has always been 10 feet up, because the people are bigger. But two points for a basket is a good concept. Otherwise it wouldn't have lasted this long. Everyone else from kids on the street on up will give two points for a field goal, but the NBA will give three for outside shots. We are going to destroy the team concept.”

Despite Mieuli's vision of impending doom, the three-point field goal hasn't ruined the game; if anything, it has enhanced it. Boston, with the NBA's best win-loss record, is perhaps not coincidentally also the leading percentage shooting team from three-point range (.376). Two of Boston's victories this year were made possible by three-point

baskets that put games into overtime, and the Celtics won a third because Guard Chris Ford hit three against Milwaukee, including one at the buzzer that beat the Bucks 97-94. Most of the Celtics' early success with the shot has come because they have had the good sense to make it a regular part of the offense, and the good fortune to have Ford to shoot it for them.

Ford's .472 shooting percentage from behind the three-point stripe (which is 22 feet from the basket in either corner



The three-point line is 22 feet from the basket in the corners and it's 23' 9" at the center

and extends out to 23' 9" just beyond the top of the key) not only leads the league, but it also stacks up well against his .486 mark for all his shots from the field. And, if you care to get nasty about it, Ford's rockets are considerably more accurate than the free-throw shooting of Denver Center Kim Hughes, whose career average is .329.

Ford essays most of his three-point attempts from the corners, often after he has come down as a wingman on the Celtic fast break. “The number of times you can use it is fairly minimal,” Ford says. “I don't just come down and fire it up. My coach has confidence in me to pick my spots, and so does the team.” Ford's teammates haven't been slouches either at using the shot strategically. In a game at Detroit in early December, Boston trailed by three points with eight seconds

remaining and had the ball out of bounds. Center Dave Cowens took the inbounds pass and tried a three-pointer, but the ball bounced off the rim and into the hands of Forward M. L. Carr. Carr could easily have taken the ball right back up and scored two points—something Celtic rookie Larry Bird said later he would have done without thinking—but instead he dribbled out to the three-point line and fired. The ball sailed through the nets as time expired, and Ford added another three-pointer to help the Celtics get a 118-114 overtime win.

While Ford has been making good use of the shot all season—he is as likely to fire it in the first quarter as in the fourth—most NBA teams have employed it “as a weapon of last resort,” according to Phoenix Assistant Coach Al Bianchi, once the head coach of the ABA Virginia Squires. “In the ABA,” says Bianchi, “a lot of teams used it to change the complexion of games in other periods as well as the fourth. I think the fact it is an ABA thing made a lot of NBA people hesitant about using it. The funny thing is, it's harder to hit three-point goals in the last few minutes when you're playing catch-up because teams will concede the two-pointers and pressure your three-point shooter.”

The notion of each NBA team having a “three-point shooter” it could bring in when it is behind is not that farfetched, or ridiculous, depending on whom you talk to. Ford says, “I don't think teams are going to go out and get somebody like a DH in baseball.” But a lot of players disagree. In any case, the frequent comparison of the three-point shot to the American League's DH rule is spurious, because the designated hitter rule removes certain options from a manager's strategy. In basketball the opposite is true: “Some coaches don't like it because it forces another strategy decision on them, and they feel they have to make enough of those already,” says Utah's Tom Nissalke, another former ABA coach. “But it was instrumental in a lot of outcomes in the ABA, and I think it will reach that same status in the NBA. Teams will start drafting better long-range shooters.”

One veteran NBA coach who likes the

continued

Boston's Ford (.472), the leader in three-point accuracy, lofts a long one from the corner

rule is Gene Shue of the San Diego Clippers. The Clippers not only lead the league by a wide margin in three-point attempts, but San Diego Guard Brian Taylor *by himself* has outshot every team in the NBA except Boston and New Jersey. Through the Clippers' game with Washington last Saturday, Taylor had taken a whopping 119 shots from three-point country, hitting 47 of them. "Gene told the guards he wanted us to look for that shot to open up the middle and force the other team's guards to play us more honestly," Taylor says. "He thinks it's an easy shot."

Shue frequently fools around with the shot himself during Clipper practices, as does Kansas City Coach Cotton Fitzsimmons. The difference is that Shue believes in the shot; Fitzsimmons may enjoy launching toy rockets in practice, but he doesn't want to see them in the Kings' offense. Once Kansas City's outstanding shooting guard, Otis Birdsong, asked Fitzsimmons, "What if Scott [Woolman] and I are lightin' it up some night? Can we shoot it then?" Fitzsimmons said no. "That's why our percentage for that shot is so low [right of 56 for .142]," says Birdsong. "We only shoot them as a matter of desperation."

Taylor is no stranger to the three-point shot; one year he led the ABA in shooting it. In the post-merger NBA he needed a couple of minutes to readjust. After that he came out blazing. "It took a while for me to get my confidence at it," Taylor says, "because I'm basically a good percentage shooter." And playing alongside Lloyd Free, the league's second-leading scorer, hasn't hurt. "A lot of times my man just runs and double-teams Lloyd," Taylor says. "But I'd say over half of my three-pointers have come from our center popping the ball back out to me when the other team's guards are sagging in on him."

In Seattle, on the day after Christmas, Taylor hooked up with Downtown Freddie Brown of the SuperSonics in what may have been the best three-point duel of the year. Taylor got things rolling late in the second period with a three-point jumper from the top of the circle, a shot that Referee Darrell Garretson ruled was only good for two because, according to Garretson, Taylor's foot was touching the line when he took the shot. The rules allow a shooter to cross the line as he

jumps into the shot, but his feet must leave the ground from behind the boundary line. Taylor thought he had been wronged, so the next time he brought the ball up the floor he returned to exactly the same spot and let loose another one. Again it went in, and this time Garretson raised both arms to signify a three-point goal. Then he laughed. And Taylor laughed. But Freddie Brown didn't even smile. He headed Downtown.

At the opposite end of the floor, Brown pulled up at the identical spot from which Taylor had shot twice and pulled the trigger. Three points! While Taylor was tearing downtown a crowd of nearly 25,000 Sonic fans started trying to tear the King-

THREE-POINT SCORING

PLAYER	FG	FGA	PCT.
Ford, Boston	40	85	.471
Roche, Denver	23	53	.434
Brown, Seattle	18	42	.429
Taylor, S.D.	47	119	.395
Williams, S.D.	16	43	.372
Bird, Boston	16	44	.364
Winters, Mil.	18	52	.346
Hassett, Ind.	24	70	.343
Newlin, N.J.	18	64	.281
Gervin, S.A.	11	45	.244

dome down. When he reached the top of the circle, he paused for a moment and then, with a fine sense of theater, let fly. Again the ball seemed to catch only the bottom of the net as it dropped through for three more points.

Brown was unable to answer on the next exchange, missing from just inside the boundary. The whole sequence lasted only half a minute or so, but as Taylor would later note, "It was great while we had it going. The crowd was freaking out, and I was tripping on it myself." For the night Taylor hit on four of his five official three-point attempts and finished with 28 points, even though his team lost 124-104.

Many experts were surprised that Brown didn't immediately take command of the three-point scoring leadership this season, so noted had he become for his airmail specials. He has made only 18 of the shots and stands third in accuracy, which disturbs him not at all. "What a lot of people don't realize is that basketball isn't meant to be played

from that far out," Brown says. "Most guys can't shoot from there."

While this may seem surprising talk from so noted a long-range gunner as Brown, his is not a lone voice. Only recently has New Jersey's Kevin Loughery, another ex-ABA coach, begun to find that other teams are utilizing the three-point correctly. "I've always been a proponent of the shot," Loughery says. "It can be very exciting for the fans and very effective within a game. You can hit a few early and turn a game around. But until recently, there was too much wild shooting. In games that were already decided, guys would come downtown and just let fly. It was very bad for the game, bad for basketball's image. But lately things have settled down and teams are learning how to use it. It's not a good percentage shot, so you have to pick your spots. If you find the right ones, it can help you win a ball game here and there."

Certainly no team has been helped more by the rule during the past dozen years than the Indiana Pacers. Back in the old shoot-'em-up days of the ABA, the Pacers had three-point specialists such as Rick Mount, who once hit three three-pointers in 40 seconds to put a game into overtime; Roger Brown, who hit seven of them in the sixth game of the 1970 ABA championship series with Los Angeles; and, of course, the immortal Billy Keller, who did everything with the shot that has ever been done, including once hitting nine three-point baskets in one game. He would have had 11 had he not stepped on the line on one and slightly out of bounds on another. One night he hit seven in a row—seven in a row!—against San Antonio. "They all came on fast-break situations and it was boom, boom, boom," recalls Slick Leonard, Keller's coach and still the coach of the Pacers. "He was the type of shooter that, when he had it going, he could have drop-kicked it in."

Keller, who isn't dead or anything, just immortal, was one of the most feared three-point shooters of all time in the ABA, and it was in that league that the shot became a near art. During the ABA's nine-year life-span, an average of 7.85 three-point shots were attempted in each game, and 2.33 were made. The three-point even brought Les Selvig from obscurity to a place in the record book. On Feb. 15, 1968 in the Denver Coli-

seum, Selva scored 10 three-point field goals for—who can forget them?—the Anaheim Amigos against the old Rockets. Selva took 26 shots from three-point range that night. In contrast, NBA teams are only attempting 4.38 shots a game, and they are making an average of 1.11, for a .252 shooting percentage.

It's only a matter of time, Leonard says, before "somebody will hit five or six three-pointers. I never felt it was an impossible shot. I remember back when Dolph Schayes was playing for Syracuse. He used to shoot a two-handed set shot at least five feet behind where that line would have been if they had had a three-point shot back then."

Joey Hassett, who is called Sonar by some of his Pacer teammates, is the latest in Indiana's long line of long shooters. Hassett has gotten the Pacers into three overtime games, two of which his team won, with shots at the buzzer. In one of those victories, over New York, he entered the game with two seconds remaining after having been on the bench the entire second half. Indiana, trailing by three points, inbounded the ball to Hassett, who had sheared off a double pick. He turned and released the ball. Had a Knick player fouled Hassett or some other Pacer before he could have attempted the shot, Indiana would have had to go to the free-throw line and settle for no more than two points. Unfortunately for the Knicks, and indeed for many NBA teams this season, no one thought of giving the intentional foul that would have ensured victory. "It's funny," says Ed Rush, an NBA official who worked in the ABA for three years. "In the old league you had to turn and fire as soon as you got the ball inbounded, no matter how many seconds were left, so you wouldn't get fouled and lose the game. Those guys don't seem to have caught on to that yet."

When they finally do—and they will, they will—the owners will have to do something to balance the scales again. "All our rules are designed to help the team that's behind catch up," says Rush. "It's to keep the fans in their seats." That, of course, raises the ugly specter of a new NBA free-throw shooting rule: four chances to make three!

You think that you will never see a thing as ugly as four to make three? Don't bet on it.

BYND



A cool head in the corners: the Celtics' Ford



Big men at the buzzer: Joe Hassett

San Diego's Brian Taylor (left), a top man with the three-pointer in the ABA, is on target again.



REALLY MAKING TRACKS

Engineers have given indoor runners faster tracks, but opinions differ widely as to which one is "fastest"

by DAN LEVIN

The fastest indoor running track in the world is in San Diego, Long Beach, Los Angeles, Albuquerque, Pocatello, Houston, College Park, Philadelphia, New York, Cambridge, Boston, Milan, Genoa and Turin. Let those who would single out one sift through a nightmare of statistical comparisons, evaluate the conflicting opinions of engineers and of great runners, weigh the importance of a dozen or so variables and define the word "fast." If, as one popular dictionary puts it, the definition is: "Adapted to or suitable for rapid movement: a fast turnpike," then probably the track that was used for the past 12 years in New York's Madison Square Garden did not qualify. A new Garden

continued



Peter Greene and Thomas McMahon (right) devised a mechanical "leg" to test the resilience of their Harvard track. Floyd Highfill, a specialist in the design of banking, collaborated with Greene and McMahon on Madison Square Garden's new track.







Bird Dick Buerkle moves up on the banking at Long Beach to pass like a stock car driver.

track will be inaugurated on the 19th of this month for the Olympic Invitational and it may join the swollen list of contenders for the title of "fastest indoor track in the world."

The old Garden track was a mess, which is not to say it was "slow." Its cork-and-rubber surface was pitted and torn by years of spiked-shoe pounding, the plywood base underneath the running surface sagged, the height of its banked turns had been messed around with at least twice. Among 11-lap-to-a-mile tracks the Garden's turns were relatively tight, which figures to limit speed. But as miler Paul Cummings said before last February's Millrose Games, "This meet has a definite aura about it—the level of excitement, the great competition, the crowd; there's something about it all that's conducive to great performances." Then he went out and played the rabbit in the mile as Eamonn Coghlan, with a 3:55, missed the indoor record by a mere one-tenth of a second. Not bad

for an antique track with too tight turns.

Many factors contribute to making a track fast, and not all of them have to do with its design. Great competitors make slow tracks fast, poor ones make fast tracks slow. Crowd reaction is important, too. For example, a four-minute mile has never been run in the Cow Palace despite attempts by Jim Ryan and Kap Keino. A contributing factor: San Francisco's undemonstrative fans.

Even the reputation of a track comes into the equation. As Dick Buerkle, Coghlan's predecessor as indoor record holder in the mile, says, "If a track gets to be known as a fast one then you're likely to think, 'Well, I'll run fast there.' It's almost like a teacher and a kid. Expect the kid to be bad and he is. Expect a track to be fast and it's fast."

But in some cases there is no easy explanation for superior performances. Indoor records for men and women have been set at the Dartmouth Relays—by Villanova's four-mile relay team (16:19) in 1976, by Lorna Forde in the 500 meters (1:10.5) in 1978. The Dartmouth track is a nice one, eight laps to the mile, with an Astrotrack surface, but the competition is rarely world-class and the relays are held in mid-January, supposedly before anyone is in top shape.

Because most major indoor tracks are portable, the men who put them together also can have a significant impact on the results. Marty Liquori says, "The track at The Spectrum in Philadelphia is fast one year, and the next the crew might have to rush to put it together. Then its spring will be different and times will be poor." At Toronto, where the track is usually set up over hockey ice, "One year it's fine and the next it's like the bridge over the River Kwai," says Liquori.

Or a dry and crusty river bed. The surface of many fast indoor tracks is plywood. It is easily chipped to splinters by spiked shoes, and it will become treacherous and slow if not replaced regularly. Moreover, tracks can lose their resiliency, fast ones going slow in a season of heavy use. Polyurethane, plastic or rubber surfaces over plywood are longer-wearing, but do they slow a runner down? Yes and no. It depends on which runners and engineers you talk to.

Floyd Highfill of Las Cruces, N. Mex., a 40-year-old chemical engineer and the most influential designer of running tracks to date, is much less concerned with surfaces (although all the tracks he



Bob Davies racks with Highfill as a fast-track designer.

has designed, save one, utilize plywood) than with turns. Highfill has developed a unique banking design that he and many runners claim helps get a competitor from straightaway to straightaway faster than any other. Tracks designed by Highfill are being used in Los Angeles, Albuquerque, Pocatello, Idaho, College Park, Md. and Philadelphia, but, thanks to Coghlan, the most renowned is in San Diego.

The week after Coghlan ran his 3:55 in New York he was in San Diego for the Jack in the Box Indoor Games, saying, "San Diego has the fastest track." The 26-year-old Irishman was not just speculating. A year earlier he had run a mile there in 3:57.9—and had finished third. Wilson Waigwa won in 3:55.7, and a record five runners broke four minutes. Little wonder Coghlan thought the track was fast.

This time he ran a 3:52.6 mile, breaking Buerkle's world record by an astounding 2.3 seconds. The second- and third-place finishers, Steve Scott and Steve Lacy, broke it, too, with times of 3:54.1 and 3:54.7. When Coghlan was asked, "Is this the fastest track you've ever been on?" he replied, "It must be. It's the fastest mile I've ever run. But most of the credit must go to the competition. Without them I might have slowed down, as I did in New York."

The Jack in the Box meet, run toward the end of the season, generally attracts the top runners. How would Coghlan have fared without such strong rivals, or on the same track six weeks earlier, or if the 18 men who labored all night to assemble the track had been less conscientious? As meet director Al Franken said, "They took more time to set it up this year—they had to be more careful—because last year when they took it apart they stacked the sections out of order." When they got it together, it was certainly springy. A workman had to be assigned to patrol the track, pounding in nails that were being worked loose by the vibrations set up by the runners.

But still there were problems. Steve Scott was asked, "Was it the track or the competition?"

"Well, it sure wasn't the track," he said. "Did you see that soft spot in Lane 1 right after the starting line? A few times I thought my knees were going to buckle. I still think the fastest track is at the Sunkist meet in Los Angeles. It's newer and it has more support beams."

The Sunkist track is also a Floyd Highfill design, and it is nine years newer. But Highfill says it has no more support beams than San Diego's, though he admits that you can order one grade of plywood and get another, and possibly the Sunkist track has a different resiliency for that reason. But it still has 11 laps to the mile, as do San Diego's and Madison Square Garden's, though it is relatively wide for a track of that size. The radius of its turns, 40' 3", is only two inches shorter than those at San Diego, a vital measurement when it comes to speed. But the L.A. Sunkist meet is usually held in January, and the crowd is not as demonstrative as San Diego's. What if...? Analyzing indoor tracks consists of a series of what if's. But there are fewer mysteries now that men like Floyd Highfill are designing them.

Highfill built the San Diego track in 1967. It was his third. He had been a distance runner at the University of New Mexico ("Though not the kind you would have heard of," he says) and after graduating in 1960 he became involved in amateur track with the Albuquerque Jaycees. Their annual outdoor meet was in financial trouble, and when it was suggested they sponsor one indoors he offered to help them build a track. He had taken courses in physics as well as in mechanical and civil engineering, but he had seen only one indoor track in his life, in Lubbock, Texas. It was so old they had to repair it between races. Highfill says, "It was obvious from the moment I saw it that the turns were designed all wrong. They lifted the straightaway in a gradual rise to the high point, right in the middle of the turn, and then they tapered it out the same way. It looked nice, but a runner was on a constantly changing surface, and at every step he was forced to readjust his stride and speed."

"My idea was to raise the straightaway as rapidly as possible at the entry to the turn, and once the track reached its maximum height I would keep it at that level through about 75% of the turn. The runner should be able to go through that portion of the track at a constant speed—I didn't make any actual tests, and I still haven't, but it seems reasonable—and finally I would bring the turn around and down to the straightaway again. I wasn't trying to build the fastest track. I was just trying to design one that would give

a runner maximum running efficiency."

Highfill no longer designs tracks full time; he works for the New Mexico Department of Agriculture as an associate state chemist, but his theories haven't changed. He has used them in all of his tracks. The larger the building the larger the track Highfill designs for it. His track in Albuquerque, for example, is 10 laps to the mile, and in Pocatello it is eight to the mile. The larger the track and the more gentle the turns, the faster it is—theoretically, at least—and there are facts to back those who regard Pocatello and Albuquerque as rapid, although neither gets runners of the quality that go to San Diego or the Millrose Games, and Albuquerque is situated at an altitude of 5,300 feet, a handicap at distances of more than a half a mile or so. Nevertheless, the unofficial indoor world record for 880 yards (1:47.9) was set at Albuquerque by Ralph Doubell in 1969. Ten years is a long time for a record to stand.

At San Diego, Paul Cummings was asked, "What's the fastest indoor track you've ever run on?" "Pocatello," he said, "but the fastest indoor track of all is in the Houston Astrodome—five laps to the mile, banked, plywood, good bounce." The Astrodome track, which has not been used since early 1974, will be laid down for a meet on Feb. 16, providing an opportunity to judge who has early foot in this Olympic year.

Coghlan says, "I always compete on 11- or 12-lap tracks, never on eight. I think it's sort of cheating to run on an eight-lap track." Be that as it may, because of the variety of indoor track sizes, the International Amateur Athletic Federation does not recognize any world indoor records. Coghlan's mile and other indoor "world records" have only informal international sanction. The AAU does recognize American indoor records, with two provisos: they can only be set on tracks that are at least eight laps to the mile with a 2- to 2½-inch curb. So no national records will be set in the Astrodome, or at Long Beach next week in the Muhammad Ali games. The eight-lap track in the Long Beach Arena does not have a curb. It is considered a hazard, something to trip over. The fastest 1,500 meters ever run by an American, Cummings' 3:37.6, is not recognized as an American record. Cummings ran it last Jan. 6 at the Muhammad Ali meet, finishing second to John Walker's 3:37.4 (the fastest 1,500 ever run indoors). That

continues

same night Herman Frazier ran a best-ever 1:01.2 in the 500 meters.

The Ali meet is the first important one of the indoor season. Runners are still working the kinks out of their legs, yet it was the second straight Ali meet in which Frazier and Walker had run world's best times in the 500 and 1,500.

The designer of the Long Beach track and others of the same size in Boston, Milan, Genoa and Turin and of six smaller ones is England's Ron Davies, a 51-year-old mechanical engineer and former middle-distance runner. He is president of Amalgamated Recreational Engineers and Network Associates, Ltd. (ARENA). Davies calls it "the first company to study sports facilities from an athlete's point of view." The unique aspect of his tracks, like Highfill's, is the banking of the turns. Davies and Highfill agree that turns must be as wide as possible, but Davies is more concerned with transitions in elevation. As he says, "A runner's legs are in the air much of the time, and changes up or down can affect his performance adversely, even cause him to stumble." Thus, Davies raises the straightaways of his tracks 14 inches off the ground, as the innermost lane begins to curve into a turn, the track actually dips a bit. In mid-lane it remains level, so the runner's elevation never changes, only his tilt, and Lane 2, the main passing lane, rises only slightly. But this is less apparent than the angle of the banking, which is so steep at Long Beach (19½ degrees) that runners routinely tumble off.

The function of banking is to neutralize centrifugal force, which tends to drive a runner toward the outside of any unbanked track as he enters a turn. The larger the track the smaller the problem; on quarter-mile tracks it is negligible. Ideally, a runner in the turn of a banked track should be perpendicular to the track, but that can only happen at one running speed, and the track designer must decide what that speed will be. A runner doing a four-minute-mile pace (60 seconds per quarter) will remain perpendicular to the track throughout Highfill's curves, but to do that on Davies' he must do a 46 flat for a 440. "At Long Beach you have to pick up speed just to blow through a turn," says Mark Belger, who in 1978 set the American record for 880 yards (1:48.1) at a Highfill track in College Park. But the first time he ran at Long Beach he fell off. The conclusion is that you can't just say "fast." You

have to say "fast for what?" The 440 or the mile?

Are Davies' tracks faster than Highfill's? Davies insists that the quarter-inch layer of synthetic surface that most of his clients seem to favor does not slow down runners, and that it is much more gentle on the legs than the plywood of Highfill's tracks. He adds, "Resiliency is important, but the fastest surface would be concrete."

There are those who would disagree, most notably a 37-year-old Harvard professor of applied mechanics and biology named Thomas A. McMahon, who is the designer of Harvard's indoor track. Once McMahon held the same views on concrete as Davies, but no more, and perhaps Davies and Highfill should begin feeling a bit uneasy. The two-year-old Harvard track, eight laps to a mile with a polyurethane surface over a plywood undersurface, is causing quite a stir around the Ivy League, where it is known as the Pink Carpet.

The Harvard track is a permanent structure in a bright new building all its own, unlike most of Highfill's and Davies' creations, which are set up for one or two meets a year. It is used for training as well as competition, and from the start Harvard was more concerned with safety than with speed. Runners on the university's old cinder track had suffered numerous leg injuries, and McMahon, who had done research on the locomotion of four-footed animals, was asked for advice on building a new one. Should it be banked? Yes, he said, though he added that safety would be more a function of the track's "compliance" (i.e., resiliency) than of its banking. But he expressed concern that an emphasis on safety would produce a very slow track. "Do the best you can," he was told.

McMahon, together with Peter R. Greene, a postdoctoral fellow in mechanical engineering at Harvard, began a type of research that had never been done before. In the basement of Harvard's high-energy physics laboratory they set up 80-foot track segments of every conceivable consistency, from pillows end to end to boards to concrete. They began to write computer programs. Twenty volunteer running subjects were hired, and they pounded back and forth on the little tracks. Both men had assumed that concrete would produce the fastest times, but

certain board tracks, with surfaces far more compliant than concrete, proved to be faster. They had not at first taken into account the damping phenomenon—the effect of shock absorption, for want of a better term, in the muscles of the legs. They had thought it unimportant, but finally, as Greene puts it, "We decided to throw a shock absorber into the equation. Bingo!" The answer came out of the computer: the degree of compliance they should incorporate into their track should be 10 times greater than that of most modern tracks.

Such a track would certainly be kinder to legs—and there is no question that the new track worked wonders on the legs of Harvard runners. Chronic knee pains and shin splints disappeared as if transported to Lourdes. But more surprising, according to McMahon and Greene's predictions, this unheard-of level of compliance would actually allow runners to travel 2% to 3% faster than they had before.

In the track's first season, 1977-78, the best times for Harvard runners at home averaged 3.87% faster than their best times anywhere else, and 2.04% faster than their best for the previous season. In December of 1978 a Boston educational TV station, WGBH, was filming a series on sports technology, and it wanted to illustrate the unusual qualities of the new track. Buerkle, then holder of the indoor record for the mile, was brought to Harvard to see what he could do. It was very early in the season. He had entered only one timed race—and done a 9:15 for two miles at Cornell two weeks earlier—but now, spurred by nine top Boston-area competitors, he ran a mile in 4:00.45. At the same stage of the previous season, the season in which he had set his record, his best mile was 4:11. It was tempting to give the track all the credit for the marked improvement, but Buerkle said, "Running is so complex. Still, the track didn't hurt at all."

It is difficult to explain the damping phenomenon in non-technical language. Greene says a simple test with a basketball is illustrative. When he drops one on the Harvard track it bounces significantly higher than when he drops it from the same height on concrete. "And in one sense a man is similar to a basketball," says Greene. "Both have springiness and shock absorption."

McMahon compares the Harvard track to another innovation in sports equip-

ment, the fiber-glass vaulting pole "it bends more than the old pole," he says, "but it stores energy and returns it to the vaulter, enabling him to vault higher than before."

Harvard Track Coach Bill McCurdy, in his 29th season at the university, is much less technologically oriented than either McMahon or Greene. When asked for advice about the height of the banking for the new track during its design stage he pointed to his hip and said, "Put 'er right about here." "He has good intuition," says McMahon, whose calculations produced the same conclusion.

McMahon also came up with a unique and complex banking design when he was working on the track, but Harvard decided the expenses were high enough without it, so it is probable, though unproven, that runners do not get around the Harvard turns "as efficiently as possible," as Highfill says.

The Harvard banking may be less sophisticated than some, but the track's underpinnings now make those of other fast tracks seem like junior high school wood-working projects. It is hard to tell. Although McMahon utilizes sheets of three-quarter-inch plywood, as do Davies and Highfill, that is all he will reveal about his design, except to say that underneath the plywood are "other wood and synthetic materials," in precise and intricate patterns.

McMahon told the contractors hired to build the track that the surface had to have exactly 10 times the compliance of Harvard's old cinder track (but he will not disclose exactly how springy it is). "I said," he recalls, "It must deflect this much at a given weight." They said, "We never built anything like that. We usually just slap the boards together." So McMahon and Greene built a load-deflecting device to guarantee the right range of compliance. It has a leglike structure and, says Greene, "It is accurate to one-thousandth of an inch."

Davies and Highfill support their plywood surfaces with 2 by 4s. Highfill places them every four feet apart, and he says, "I space them that way mainly for ease in carrying the sections when they take them apart after a track meet. I did try some different arrangements of 2 by 4s, but I didn't use any instruments or anything like that." Davies also utilizes 2 by 4s, but his are only 16 inches apart and run longitudinally, instead of transversely, as Highfill's do. "It's for

structural strength," he says. "It has nothing to do with springiness."

Whose tracks are intrinsically faster? Do Davies' and Highfill's complex bankings offset McMahon's and Greene's compliance formulas? Do surface materials matter? There is much talk about how fast 3M's Tartan is, and Rubaturf, made in Sweden from old tires, and Astroturf, Elastoturf and Chevron. Highfill thinks plain plywood is the fastest. Davies gives his customers a list of available synthetics and lets them choose. The Harvard track is covered with a three-eighths-inch-thick carpet of polyurethane Chem-Turf. McMahon, who spent a lot of time researching such things, was asked, "How important was the choice of Chem-Turf when it comes to running speed?" "It is of zero importance," he said, "though synthetic surfaces do wear much better than wooden ones, and they are easier to clean."

The new Madison Square Garden track, the first of a promising collaboration among McMahon, Greene and Highfill, will have a painted wooden surface, but it will be used for only four meets annually. It will be a blend of Harvard scientific know-how and Highfill's experience in constructing portable wooden tracks. The compliance will be the same as that of the Harvard track, but the track's underpinnings will be of fiber glass and more exotic materials. Harvard's are of plywood. Its banked turns, designed by McMahon and Greene, will be, according to McMahon, "of a novel design never before used to our knowledge in a running track or, for that matter, in any kind of track."

For now, each of the extant tracks has its devotees. Beliger, whose personal best for 800 meters is 1:45.8 outdoors, thinks he could run a 1:46 at Harvard, where he has trained but not competed. "I feel like a butterfly on the track," he says. "But I really don't care what track I run on. What really counts is the competition. Still, if I wanted to break a record I think Harvard would be the place to do it. You could move Albuquerque to sea level, and I still think I could run faster at Harvard."

A Boston-area track coach who shall go unnamed said last year, "Would I take the Harvard track? Are you kidding? I'd push my mother off a cliff for it."

Two weeks after that statement was made, a Ron Davies-designed track was opened at Boston University. It is eight

lags to the mile, with a quarter inch of Rubaturf on top. The coach with the expandable mother brought some of his runners over for a workout and said later, "The BU track makes Harvard's look like the subway. There's no doubt it's a faster track."

And out at Amherst, Mass., Gideon Ariel, a computer scientist and consultant to a shoe manufacturer and the United States Olympic Committee, has been working at the offices of Computerized Biomechanical Analysis to calculate the properties of the ultimate track. "You must deal with an integrated system—the human body, the shoes, the top surface, the undersurface," he says. "If you deal with only one component, you cannot design anything. Sure, the hardest surface is not necessarily the fastest, but there is a difference in damping phenomena between blacks and whites. Blacks have better damping qualities. You can take five whites at random and ask them to jump on a force plate and then do the same with five blacks, and I can show you different characteristics."

Thus, the more science intervenes in these matters, the more complex they are shown to be. And it is no wonder that despite the recent acceleration of track-building research and the results recorded on the new ones, most track people remain divided on whether this track or that one is inherently the fastest. In a frustrating 1979 indoor season in which he contracted a mild but pesky virus, Buerkle entered five major meets and failed to improve on his surprising time at Harvard. Nevertheless, he says, "I think psychology has a lot to do with it. To say why a track is fast, that's pretty hard to do, although those scientists at Harvard, they . . . I don't know. I don't know what to say."

Highfill says, "It doesn't matter how fast a track is, you can't run a four-minute mile on it if you can't run a four-minute mile." Ah, but it does matter to a 4:01 miler who might break four minutes on a faster track, or to fans who might cheer a world record on one rather than another. And even if tests were developed that could give every track an accurate speed rating, the fun of figuring out the "fastest" would not be gone because there can be no one fastest track for everyone.



Until recently Michael Brooks was overshadowed at La Salle by famed alumnus Tom Gola, but as he zeroes in on Gola's records he has built a rep of his own

He has reached the Gola

Throughout his career, it has been the misfortune of Michael Brooks to perform in the shadow of players whose extraordinary skills have almost made them candidates for deification. Despite the fact that he set a bunch of records at West Catholic High in the Philadelphia Catholic League, college recruiters and fans flocked around his childhood teammate and friend Gene Banks, now a star at Duke. And although in this, the senior year of a distinguished career at La Salle College, Brooks should break nearly every significant school record established by the legendary Tom Gola, Gola remains, in the minds and hearts of most Explorer fans, the best basketball player in La Salle history.

It has been 26 years since Gola, a 6' 6" forward, led the Explorers to the NCAA championship—La Salle's first and only

national title in any sport and the last time a team from the Northeast won the NCAA crown. Besides that victory, the Gola era included an NIT championship in 1952 and, in 1955, a second-place finish in the NCAA's behind Bill Russell and the University of San Francisco.

Gola wound up his collegiate career as La Salle's leading scorer (2,462 points) and followed it with an illustrious 11 seasons in the NBA, with the Philadelphia Warriors and the New York Knicks. Then, in 1968, after La Salle was put on NCAA probation, Gola took over as coach for the 1968-69 season and led the Explorers to a 23-1 record, their finest ever, and a No. 2 national ranking.

While La Salle fans certainly have longed for a second national championship, they seem to have yearned even more for another Gola. Before Brooks,

three players were likely candidates. Bill Raftery, a slick guard, arrived in 1959, but he was hampered by a bad back. Raftery, now the coach at Seton Hall, says, "When I went to La Salle they said I'd be the one to make them forget Tom Gola. By the end of my career, all they wanted to forget was me." Larry Cannon, a star forward from 1966 to 1969 and now an assistant coach at his alma mater, was slowed by blood clots in his leg. Ken Duerett, who ranks third on the Explorers' career scoring list behind Gola and Brooks, came closer than the others, but late in his senior season (1970-71) he ripped the ligaments in his right knee, which curtailed his NBA service with the Royals-Kings and the 76ers to four painful and mediocre years.

But of all the pretenders to Gola's throne, it has been the enthusiastic and energetic Brooks who has staked the strongest claim. "He has awesome physical and mental energy," says La Salle coach Dave (Lefty) Ervin. Ervin, a starter for the 1965-66 La Salle team, took over as coach on Aug. 30 after Paul Westhead, who had guided the Explorers for nine years, picked up his shoot-first, play-defense-never style and moved to Los Angeles as an assistant to the Lakers' Jack McKinney.

Gola greatly influenced Brooks' decision to stay in his hometown and play for La Salle. "When someone like that comes to talk to you, you feel honored," says Brooks. "Also, he has a nice Cadillac. When I first met him, I was in shock. He drove me from my high school to the campus and I couldn't say anything. I just sat there in amazement and watched him drive."

Gola's message to Brooks was a lesson he had learned nearly 30 years ago when he entered La Salle as the Golden Boy and fulfilled the promise an adoring press had predicted for him. "I told Mike that all the sportswriters knew and respected him," Gola says, "and that if he moved to another town, he'd have to convince a lot of other sportswriters that he was a good player."

But that wasn't the only reason Brooks remained in Philadelphia. With the over-

continued



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whelming amount of publicity given Banks and his talented West Philly teammates, the less flamboyant Brooks was almost completely overlooked. In fact, only five schools—Villanova, La Salle, Rutgers, Memphis State and St. Joseph's—expressed any real interest in him. It had always been this way, even when Brooks and Banks were teammates on the Sherwood Recreation Center's 14-year-old team. And when Banks' play began getting rave reviews as soon as he entered high school, Brooks was just around the corner at West Catholic, languishing on the bench as the 19th—and last—man on the team. "I couldn't do anything right in practice," he says. "I was even thinking about quitting, but then one of the starters, who didn't play in one game, was crying and threatening to quit, too. I thought to myself, 'God, here I am not playing and this guy is crying.' So I waited until the last game of the season and told the guys I was going to start the next year. They all said, 'Aw, get outta here.' I figured maybe I'd bitten off more than I could chew. But I started."

And Brooks has been a starter ever since. Now standing slightly more than 6' 7" and weighing an exquisitely proportioned 221 pounds, Brooks has a combination of power and quickness that has NBA coaches drooling. "He has the perfect body for basketball," says Ervin. And Brooks is not only a prolific scorer—with 2,106 points he will pass Gola late this season and become La Salle's all-time leading scorer—but he is also a powerful rebounder at both ends of the floor.

After winning East Coast Conference Rookie of the Year honors as a freshman in 1977, the next season Brooks led a La Salle squad dominated by sophomores to a surprising 18-12 record and a berth in the NCAA East Regional. He was the only player in the country to rank in the Top Ten in both scoring (ninth) and rebounding (seventh). In 1978-79 Brooks averaged 23.3 points and 13.3 rebounds a game and earned All-America recognition for the second consecutive year, despite severely bruising his thigh in the second game against Kentucky, an injury that bothered him for virtually the entire season.

Nonetheless, the word on Brooks was that his ballhandling and defense were questionable and that his outside shooting needed improvement. Many La Salle boosters, disappointed by last season's 15-13 record, laid the blame at the feet

of Westhead. A few even offered to buy up the two years left on his contract.

Westhead's system was designed to allow players one of five specific shots from six feet to 17 feet from the basket, and it relied on the fast break on every play—especially after an opponent scored. Westhead would release two men down the court early in various defensive situations, daring the other team to shoot. But although it worked well in 1977-78, Westhead's system broke down last season after the Explorers lost Brooks and two other starters, Kurt Kanaskie and Mark Spain, to injuries, and as opponents figured out how to stop it.

Under Ervin, La Salle, which has a 5-4 record, still fast-breaks, but the emphasis this season has been on a crisp half-court offense and pressure defense. With the arrival of Center Stanley Williams to provide rebounding and defense, Brooks is free to operate at forward, his natural position, for the first time since his freshman year. "He's playing much more patiently now," says Ervin. "He's much more secure. He has got almost premier confidence."

This attitude is paying dividends. Against BYU in the finals of the Cougar Classic three weeks ago in Provo, Utah, Brooks scored a tournament-, school- and personal-record 51 points, including 28 in a row during one stretch, in a 108-106 triple-overtime loss to the 18th-ranked Cougars. He also established records for most field goals made (24) and attempted (36). "We tried one, two and even three men on him," said Cougar Coach Frank Arnold. "He went over, through and around them."

Says Michael's mother, Rita, "I called him up the day before the game and told him to go out and score 50. Little did I know he was going to do it." She ought to know better than that. Brooks would do anything for his mother, like wait to score his 2,000th career point, which he did against Rider three weeks ago, until she could attend the game in person. "It was the first time she had seen me play all season," he says.

Since 1966, when she was divorced from Rudolph Brooks, Rita has raised Michael and his two sisters, Rita, 20, and Aleta, 13, alone. Michael calls her his "best friend." "If everyone else abandons me, she'll always be there," he says. When the Brookses moved from their old neighborhood in Southwest Philly into a comfortable, three-story townhouse near

the La Salle campus in November 1978, Michael, who had spent his first two years in a dormitory, returned to live with his family.

Brooks occasionally goes back to the old neighborhood, to visit friends and watch play in the street at the corner of 58th and Willows, where an old backboard is nailed to a light pole. "There were a lot of good games at 58th and Willows after the sun went down," he says. Basketball, he says, allowed him to resist the pressure of joining a neighborhood gang. "All the guys knew that I wanted to play basketball," he says, "and besides, who's ever seen a tall guy in a gang?" A student in criminal justice, Brooks is proud that he will graduate in May, on time.

Last week at the Lobo Classic in Albuquerque, N. Mex., Brooks scored 31 points, hiking his season's average to 25.0, and had 23 rebounds in an 89-88 loss to Utah State and an 88-83 victory over Idaho.

Brooks was a member of the U.S. team that won the gold medal at last summer's Pan-American Games and finished as the second leading U.S. scorer and the team's leading rebounder.

Which is why Bobby Knight, who coached the U.S. team, is now a very big supporter of Brooks. In a letter to Lawrence Fin, La Salle's sports-information director, Knight wrote, "He [Brooks] is one of the most enjoyable people to be around and coach that I have ever had. ... If I were to be allowed to start my own team tomorrow and pick anybody for it that I chose, the first person I would pick would be Michael Brooks."

THE WEEK

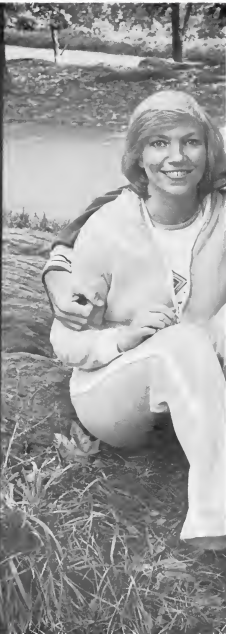
(Dec. 23-29)

by HERM WEISKOPF

WEST Teams that serve as the hosts for all those holiday "classics" often win the tournaments, but it was nine years between visits for co-host Oregon State in its backyard event, the Fir West Classic. The Beavers reached the final by drubbing Idaho 100-59 as Ray Blume set a Classic record with 11 assists, and then whipping Bingham Young 86-71 as MVP Steve Johnson hit on 17 of 19 field-goal tries and had 38 points. That set up a showdown with unbeaten Clemson, which had defeated Texas Tech 79-68 and North Carolina-Charlotte 85-65. Oregon State made good on 15 of 22 second-

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half shots and, after forging a 65-65 tie, sealed a 72-67 victory by converting seven free throws in the last 43 seconds.

Four other host teams did not fare as well. New Mexico had to settle for second place in its Lobo Invitational after losing to Utah State 117-83. Brian Jackson of the Aggies, who scored 50 points in two games, was the MVP. But the top scorer, with 57 points, was one of the nation's highest-scoring sophomores, New Mexico's Kenny Page.

Cutting down the nets after the Las Vegas Holiday Classic were Weber State's Wildcats, who earned that honor with some clutch shooting. After blowing a 14-point lead against Michigan State in the opening round, the Wildcats pulled out a 63-61 win when Bruce Collins' layup barely beat the final buzzer. In the finals, Weber State got a basket from Richard Smith with six seconds left to defeat Nevada-Las Vegas 79-78.

Eight days after its football team won the Holiday Bowl in San Diego, Indiana's basketball squad took the Cabell Classic there. And the Hoosiers did it without leading scorer Mike Woodson, who underwent surgery for a ruptured disc, and two other players, including starting Guard Randy Wirtman, who was on crutches. Indiana, however, did have Ishaq Thomas, a superb freshman. With the score 68-68 in a first-round game against Tennessee, Thomas drove from midcourt and put in a decisive underhanded layup with one second remaining. Opposing the Hoosiers in the title game was Brown, which had beaten San Diego State 71-64. MVP Thomas, who had 20 points in the Hoosiers' first outing, had 11 points, six rebounds and five assists as Indiana beat the Bruins 61-52.

Hawaii was one of two surprise teams at its Rainbow Classic. The Rainbows rallied from 16 points back in the second half to knock off Nevada-Reno 105-101 in overtime in the first round as Thomas Loudon hit on 13 of 14 shots. Hawaii then made it tie to the finals by beating Nebraska 67-55. It was there that Illinois, the other unexpected finalist, put an end to Hawaii's hopes 94-82. In earlier games, the Fighting Illini defeated Army 75-48 and Louisville 77-64.

UCLA opened its Pac-10 schedule with two lopsided victories. After wallowing California 73-59, the Bruins beat Stanford 92-60.

1. OREGON STATE (11-1)
2. UCLA (7-2) 3. BRIGHAM YOUNG (9-3)

MIDWEST Last Thursday, Oklahoma freshman Guard Bo Overton awoke and found that the tires had been stolen off his car. That night Overton stole the show against Western Michigan during the first round of the granddaddy of all in-season tournaments, Oklahoma City's 44-year-old All-College. Overton hit his final seven field-goal attempts and had a team-high

16 points as the Sooners defeated the Broncos 72-60. Overton wasn't the whole show for Oklahoma; the Sooners set a school record with 653 marksmanship in that game and duplicated that figure the next time out while beating Wyoming 70-56. Terry Storm led Oklahoma against the Cowboys by making all 10 of his shots and scoring 22 points. In the title game, Oklahoma shot 635 and got 24 points and 10 rebounds from Steve Bajema to beat Louisiana Tech 80-70.

In a matchup of rebuilding teams, Memphis State showed that its program has a solid foundation by upsetting Arkansas 74-67. When the Razorbacks cut a 14-point halftime deficit to four late in the game, the Tigers made nine straight foul shots to pull away.

1. MISSOURI (10-0)
2. VIRGINIA TECH (9-1) 3. LOUISVILLE (7-2)

MIDEAST How rabid are Kentucky basketball fans? Well, 10,000 of them showed up just to see the Wildcats take shooting practice on Saturday morning. Neither their numbers nor their enthusiastic cheers were out of the ordinary, at least not by Kentucky standards. "We're going to need you tonight more than we've ever needed you," Coach Joe Hall told the crowd. He wasn't kidding; his team was to face unbeaten Notre Dame without the services of three players. Two freshmen, 7'1" Sam Bowie and team-assists leader Dirk Minniefield, had been suspended for the game for violating training rules, and starting Guard Dwight Anderson had left the squad for "personal reasons."

As expected, the capacity crowd of 16,613 in Louisville's Freedom Hall did its part to spur on the Wildcats. What was unexpected was the help Hall got from his bench. The Irish, hoping to wear down the Kentucky guards, pressed right from the start. But even when the Wildcats brought on their subs—at one stage, Kentucky had a walk-on and three freshmen on the floor—they had no trouble with the Irish press, mainly because senior Guard Kyle Macy took charge. He pumped in 21 points and committed only one turnover as Kentucky won 86-80.

Mississippi and Louisiana State added to the SEC's prestige. Ole Miss, which has sent eight football teams to the Sugar Bowl, sent its basketball squad there for the first time and pulled off a pair of upsets to win the title. MVP John Stroud of the Rebels had 28 points in a 71-66 win over Michigan. Then, with the Rebels scoring 16 layups and with Stroud getting 32 points, Ole Miss handed Virginia Tech its first loss, 70-66. LSU bombed Boston University 92-72 and Delaware 92-64 as Rudy Macklin and DeWayne Scates each scored 51 points.

Several Big Ten teams did well, too. Minnesota took its sixth straight Pittsburg Classic by bumping off Rutgers 98-59 and Texas A&M 69-63. Purdue's Joe Barry Carroll had

23 points during an 82-58 romp over Tulsa. Ohio State whipped Northwestern State (La.) 71-46, and Iowa stopped Drake 77-66 in a battle between wounded underdogs. The Hawkeyes' all-time leading scorer, Ronnie Lester, missed the game because of strained knee ligaments that will sideline him for several weeks. Three other Iowa starters were also ailing, but freshman Bob Hansen took over at point guard for Lester and scored 14 points. Another freshman, Mark Gornow, who wore a brace to protect his injured left thumb, had 15 points and 11 rebounds. And Vince Brookins, who was averaging eight points a game, came through with 20 points and 14 rebounds. Drake had to play without Forward Eric Sampson, lost for the season after breaking a leg during practice. On top of that, Lewis Lloyd of the Bulldogs, who went into the game as one of the nation's leading scorers with a 31.9 average, was held to 20 points.

When it was announced that the MVP of the Chickadee Classic was DePaul sophomore Mark Aguirre, he grabbed the microphone and said, "I don't deserve it, and I'm giving it to Terry Cummings." Teammate Cummings, a 6'9" freshman, had 31 points and 20 rebounds in a 92-83 victory over Loyola of Chicago in the finals. As for Aguirre, he had 50 points in two games and 25 assists as the Blue Demons took a non-tournament game from Bradley 68-61.

"The first 26 minutes was the best basketball I've had a team play," said Jacksonville's Tates Locke, now in his 13th season as a coach. At the end of those 26 minutes, the Dolphins led Duquesne 50-28 and they went on to win 73-54. Unbeaten Jacksonville also took the Gator Bowl title, stopping William & Mary 58-43 and Florida 61-55.

Marquette was stunted by Rhode Island 64-57 in the Milwaukee Classic finale.

1. KENTUCKY (11-1)
2. OHIO STATE (7-1) 3. LSU (8-0)

EAST Duke's Mike Givenski and Gene Banks carried the Blue Devils to their first place in the Iron Duke Classic. The day before the tournament, all the Duke players were required to see *All Pro*, a motivational film. "That helped us remember what we had to go through to get where we are [the team is ranked No. 1 in both the AP and UPI polls] and what we have to do to stay there and improve," Banks said. He was further impressed by something that tennis pro Virginia Wade mentioned in the film. "She said an athlete tends to get into an everyday routine in his sport and sometimes forgets how good he's supposed to be," Banks said. "I'm happy I was able to get back in the groove." Playing his best ball of the season, Banks had 28 points as Duke beat Vermont 92-67 in the opening round. Givenski, too, had some nifty numbers that night: 23 points, 17 rebounds, eight blocked shots and five assists. Cincinnati,

which had knocked off South Carolina 69-62 in the first round, held Duke to a 71-71 stand-off in regulation time of the championship matchup. That was it for the Bears, though, as Gmiski scored nine points in OT and Duke won 87-75. Gmiski finished with 25 points and 16 rebounds, while Blanks had 21 points and 12 rebounds.

Virginia's Ralph Sampson was another player who claimed that he had "got in the groove." Sampson put all his talents together in the second half against Virginia Commonwealth in the first round of the Richmond Times-Dispatch tournament. The Cavaliers, who trailed 42-40 at halftime, won 89-72 as Sampson sank eight of 10 shots, had seven rebounds and blocked five shots in the final 20 minutes. The 7'4" freshman continued his dominance during a 79-58 rout of previously unbeaten Old Dominion in the tournament finale, coming through with 22 rebounds, 15 points and 10 blocked shots.

A freshman also led St. John's to victory. He was 6'6" David Russell, who became the Holiday Festival MVP by coming off the bench to score 10 points, get seven rebounds and propel the Redmen past Boston College 78-70 to earn the tournament title. In the

PLAYER OF THE WEEK

STEVE JOHNSON: Oregon State's 6' 10 1/2" junior center sank 34 of 43 field-goal attempts (he's shooting .782 for the season), scored 76 points and grabbed 19 rebounds as the Beavers took the Far West Classic in Portland.

opening round, St. John's beat Lafayette 68-58, and the Eagles upset Georgetown 75-74 in overtime.

Marty Head of Syracuse, who shined his pate before the season, put on a hair-raising performance during the Rochester (N.Y.) Classic, hitting four straight bombs at the start of the second half of the title game against Villanova. That, plus 11 assists by Eddie Moss and 24 points by Louis Orr, enabled the Orangemen to beat the Wildcats 92-84.

Four of the top 10 women's teams in the country went at it during the Manufacturers Hanover Christmas Classic in New York. Top-ranked Old Dominion was a 66-58 opening-round victor over ninth-ranked Maryland, and No. 4 Louisiana Tech got 28 points from Pam Kelly and 13 assists from Julie White to beat No. 7 Rutgers 89-83 in overtime. The Lady Techsters then avenged their loss in last season's AIAW title game by defeating the Lady Monarchs 59-57 as Kelly and Janice Mufford each scored 15 points. Nancy Lieberman and Inge Nissen, who had 18 points apiece in their first-round game, each had 14 against Tech.

1. DUKE (10-0)

2. NORTH CAROLINA (5-1) 3. ST. JOHN'S (8-1)

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THE 24 HOURS OF PLAINVILLE



STAN WATCHED, WATCHED AND WATCHED

Title this "I Was a Sports Junkie for a Day," or "I Have Seen the Future of TV Sports and It Makes Me Giddy."

I recently spent part of a weekend holed up in a motel room in Connecticut watching one full day—24 hours' worth—of the continuous sports programming ESPN puts on each weekend. ESPN is the Entertainment and Sports Programming Network, the cable television outfit that has advertised itself as the network for sports junkies.

ESPN, based in Bristol, Conn., has been in operation since September and is now feeding sports to more than 500 cable TV companies in 47 states. On weekdays it's on the air from 6 p.m. to 4 a.m.; on weekends it cranks up at 6 p.m. Friday and doesn't quit until 4 a.m. Monday. That's 58 hours. Non-stop. To find out just what kind of a fix the junkies are getting, I lay on a bed in Room 407 at the Holiday Inn in Plainville, Conn., gazing at basketball players leaping, hockey players high-sticking, go-karts buzzing and karate fighters flailing—taking whatever ESPN would send at me during 24 hours.

My cycle started at midnight Saturday with the final basketball game of the Cable Car Classic from Santa Clara, in which San Jose State beat the host school 77-62. The live telecast featured an excellent slow-motion replay of an errant basketball upsetting a soft drink on the press table and spraying a reporter. Minnesota then whipped Brown in hockey 8-2, after which—at 4:30 a.m.—came the irrepressible enthusiasm of Dick Vitale, the former Detroit Pistons coach, doing color commentary on a taped replay of last Providence's attempt to upset No. 1-ranked Duke in the Industrial National Bank Classic. In my 5:50 a.m. stupor I recall Vitale saying, "Un-

believable, unreal, super, super, super game."

And so it went. The taped U.S. National Table Tennis Championships at 3:30 p.m. turned out to be the best event of the day. The slow-motion replays highlighted the skills of Artur Maiek and Danny Seemiller, and Maiek's 21-18 victory in the fifth game stood out as the best performance of the day. One of the low points was a tape of the International Kart Federation races from Jacksonville, Fla. at 6:30 a.m. A lower point—at 11:30 a.m.—was a tape of another Minnesota-Brown hockey game. This time Minnesota won 16-2.

Once I slipped into the junkie mentality, even ESPN couldn't provide enough sports to feed my habit. A tame golf feature at 3 p.m. about possible new stars on the PGA tour was not nearly enough of a grabber, and I switched to a regular CBS channel to pick up the NFL playoff game between Philadelphia and Chicago. By the end of my day, I had watched 11 events and numerous ESPN sports reports. Two repeat telecasts—of the Cable Car Classic and Rebel Roundup—provided welcome breaks for naps and short rests to go along with the coffee fixes that helped keep me relatively alert.

It seemed that to test my mettle ESPN saved the toughest watching for last. The cancellation of the coverage of a Tokyo tennis tournament—the film had not arrived from Japan—necessitated the substitution of a canned program on China's Fourth National Games, a sort of Sino Spartakiade. Through most of my final two hours of viewing, I looked on with increasing addiness at a jumble of gymnastic events, motorcycle races with sidecars, parachuting competition and model-boat and model-plane racing. "Certainly a mixed bag of events, I must say," the spiffy British announcer said. All this was preceded by a gang of a thousand participating in opening ceremonies straight out of the chairman's Little Red Book. The theme of the pageantry: "How the new Chinese people are not afraid of obstacles."

No sports junkie was going to sit still for this sort of propaganda when, with a flick of the dial, he could bring in the Bruins-Rangers game at Madison Square Garden. I shifted back and forth between the hockey—which ended with the Bruins brawling with the Garden customers—and the Chinese sports menu until, mercifully, China gave way to a report from the ESPN studio. At the stroke of Sunday midnight, I got up off the bed and turned off the set, vowing never to turn it on again—well, at least not for another 24 hours. END



Hot times on the old run

America's hopes for an Olympic bobsled medal next month lie with a monster named Van Hovenberg. V.H. stands a mile tall, has speed and power, wears \$5 million worth of the latest equipment and exhibits the patience of a mongoose. Through 50 years of the world's toughest competition, this monster has been battered and bested time and again, only to rise up and strike back. V.H. is Lake Placid's Mount Van Hovenberg bobsrun, the hairiest, scariest, wildest ice mile in the world. Three bobsledders have been killed on it. In 1966 Sergio Zardini, the Italian Olympic medalist, hurtled down it on an unfamiliar sled and lost, in swift succession, his control, his helmet and his life. American Speed Beattie was killed on V.H. in 1955. Max Huben of Belgium in 1949.

V.H. doesn't appear to be mellowing in its old age, either. Last month, when the top sliders from Europe and North America gathered in Lake Placid to test the course with their fancy new sleds, V.H. taught them a lesson or two. No sooner had a pair of German two-man sleds shattered the course record with runs of 1:04.11 and 1:03.70 than V.H. reared back and broke a few things, too, including a Swiss nose and a Canadian collarbone. It was as if the bobsrun were announcing: let the Germans have their one-of-fours and one-of-threes, I shall have my eighty-ones and eighty-tws. In sledding language, an eighty-one means that the sled has tipped; an eighty-two means get the ambulance.

"Ja, this is the fastest," said Austria's top driver, Walter Delle Karth, who took a wicked spill at the curve called Shady but walked away unharmed. "Compared to this course, Igls [Delle Karth's home track at Innsbruck, the site of the '76 Olympics] is an autobahn."

What makes the Van Hovenberg bobsrun so demanding is its singular geometry and variety. The run, which is 1,560 meters long and boasts a vertical drop of nearly 150 meters, includes 11 straightaways and 16 turns, the most famous of

At trials held in Lake Placid, the top European and American teams hurtled to very impressive clockings—as long as their bobsleds remained in the groove

which is Shady. Situated just above midpoint on the course, Shady is a 14-foot vertical ice wall that bends 170 degrees to the right. Sleds come off the wall doing better than 70 mph. The stress factor is a full four Gs.

As spectacular as Shady is, however, real treachery lies below, on the curves known as Little S and Zig Zag. Little S, which comes at the end of the long straight after Shady, introduces the sled to a precarious line of flight through turns 10 and 11. If the introduction is a rude one, the sled enters Zig Zag under poor control. No margin for error exists at these turns, not at full throttle. Zig zigs 90 degrees to the left. Zag zags 90 to the right. Most of the bad accidents at V.H. have occurred after poor transitions from

Zig to Zag. Just last Saturday a U.S. Air Force sled crashed there sending three of its four-man team to Placid Memorial Hospital.

"This is also where races are won or lost," says Joe McCallip, three-time North American titlist and technical director of the bobsrun for the Lake Placid Olympic Organizing Committee. "Discouraging the start, which is probably the most important factor, driving Zig Zag cleanly is the key. We clocked all sleds coming through here as they entered Zig and exited Zag. Over the whole field there was only a 3-kph differential coming in, but a 17-kph spread going out."

McCallip is attuned to every inch of the track, which last year was extensively rebuilt. A new concrete trough was



A two-man bob driven by Fritz Sperling of Austria streaks along the ice wall called Shady at 70 mph

put in, as well as a refrigeration system. When the Romanians launched a four-man sled during the time trials and tipped it over on Curve 2, it was McKillip who closed the course, grabbed a shovel and chipped out a new gradation to ensure that the bigger sleds would have a better than average chance of at least making it down to Shady. As it turned out, the Romanians were the first and last foreigners to tempt fate in a four-man sled. The other eight teams at Lake Placid were content to run their two-mans.

"We don't want any of our boys in the hospital for Christmas," said Luciano Galli of Italy, scratching his country's four-man team. "The course is very bad, very dangerous for four-man bobs." Galli added, "The concrete foundation is wrong and there is no time to change it." Many of the Europeans agreed.

There can be no such timidity once the Games open, however, and if last month's performances by the two-man sleds are any indication of things to come, old V.H. will suffer indignities at the hands of Olympic bobsledders. Although the time trials did not count for official records, the numbers spoke loud and clear. The existing course records, set during the 1978 World Championships, were 1:05.12 for the two-man and 1:03.90 for the four-man. The first man to better a record was two-time Olympic gold medalist Meinhard Nehmer of East Germany, who, driving a two-man sled, crossed the finish line in a nifty 1:04.96. But Nehmer was king of the mountain for less than 24 hours; Stefan Geisreiter of West Germany turned in a 1:04.11. Geisreiter slept on that one night and came back the next morning to execute a sizzling 1:03.70. His runs prompted U.S. Navy Commander Paul Lamey to bet that the 1980 gold medalists would crack the one-minute mark.

"Why not?" said Lamey. "The sleds are better. The athletes are better. The course is better. Nobody's over here with his best equipment, and nothing's really at stake yet. They've all been driving with their brakes on. I think we're going to see some fantastic times going up on the board. I think the contenders will need consistent one-on-threes in the two-man, and times much better than that in the four-man. Just watch them."

"Them," by universal agreement, consists of an elite corps of veteran Euro-

peans: Nehmer, Geisreiter, Delle Karb and his brother Dieter, Erick and Peter Schärer of Switzerland and perhaps two or three other pilots. The corps includes no Americans. Not as of today, anyway.

Ah, but tomorrow. Tomorrow, Lake Placid could belong to the Morgan brothers, Jim, John, Sean and Brian, of Saranac Lake, N.Y., to Wade Whitney, Howard Siler, Brant Rushlow, Paul Vincent, or Bobby Hickey, any one of whom might likely drive *numero uno* for the U.S. Or even to dark horse Sandy Kellin, of Phoenix, who logged the best American time (1:06.26) during the head-to-head heats with the Europeans.

Kellin played football at Washington State and Northern Arizona State before becoming a powerboat racer and health-spa operator. His eight-year fascination with bobsledding took him to Innsbruck for the 1976 Games, where he was a spectator. After watching the Nehmers and the Schäters do their stuff, Kellin summoned up the nerve to ride in and pilot his very first sled. He crashed the first time down. He crashed the second time down. Even so, Kellin had become so hooked on sledding that he started selling his possessions to feed his habit. First to go, in 1977, was his house. Next, his powerboat gear. Then, he bade goodbye to his car and to his half interest in a small airplane. This year he went hat in hand to bemused Arizona businessmen, trying to sell them advertising space on his sleek black sled, "The Spirit of Phoenix." Kellin managed to collect about \$10,000, which is approximately one-third of what he estimates it will cost to mount a serious attempt to qualify for the Olympic team.

"You always hear our guys complaining that they don't get in a quarter of the number of runs that the Germans or the Swiss do," Kellin says, "but I think it's a false issue. It's not the number of runs, it's the number of quality runs that counts. I had Peter Schärer out training with me in Phoenix last summer, and he helped me with race strategy. Now I approach the course piece by piece, turn by turn, the way the Europeans do. For instance, I'll make four or five runs down the course, concentrating only on curves 1 and 2. When I've got those down perfectly, I'll focus on Cliffside (curves 3-5), then Shady, and so on, until it all fits together. The Europeans are extremely

technical about this sport. Look at East Germany. They have, what, six, eight coaches out on the course? We have zero. We coach ourselves. It's hard to stand above Zig Zag and make notes on yourself as you go by."

The superiority of the East Germans extends into technological realms as well. In recent years all competitors have raced on sleds made by Sergio Siorpae of Italy—sleds that the Germans, Swiss and Austrians have modified to their own tastes and that other countries, for lack of money, have not. This has suited the International Bobsled Federation (IBF) just fine, believing as it does that sliding skills should take precedence over new-fangled hardware. Now the East Germans have come up with the first independent-suspension system for sled runners used in competition.

But it is not implausible that the novel East German sled will be upstaged by an American prototype that has recently emerged from the design labs of the Excaltor Automobile Corporation of Milwaukee. David Stevens, the company's 40-year-old president and chief engineer, has been tinkering with sled designs since 1966, but this is the first year his doodlings have been translated into metal and fiber glass. When Stevens took the sled to Lake Placid after the Europeans had gone home, Excaltor's first test runs had the whole mountain abuzz. Featuring not only four-runner suspension but four-runner steering as well, the sled was quieter, slicker, more maneuverable, and capable of cutting a finer line than anything seen before. It will be a wild scramble to work out all the bugs and to get a driver with enough experience in it by mid-February, but there's no question that the sled has the potential for medal-winning runs. Jim Gragg, the general manager of the Mount Van Hoevenberg course, watched Excaltor rocket by and said evenly, "I think it's going to win. There's never been anything like it."

Well now, V.H. has heard that kind of talk before. If it isn't this new hotshot, it's that new gizmo, and if it isn't new see on Shady, it's an extra ambulance at Zig Zag. The old course, you see, knows that if those whippersnappers start turning in one-on-twos or one-on-ones or even—sake's alive!—fifty-miles, it has a few eighty-ones and eighty-twos up its sleeve, just to show who's boss.

END

The most successful coach in Notre Dame history is Knute Rockne, right? Wrong. Frank Leahy? No. Ara Parseghian? No again. Digger Phelps? Still no. The most successful coach in Notre Dame history is Mike DeCicco, and fencing is his game. Rockne had a winning percentage of .897 with the Irish, Leahy .888, Parseghian's was .848, and Phelps' basketball teams have been .693. But DeCicco (pronounced de-chee-ko) sports a gaudy .911 record, with 329 wins and 33 losses in 17 years. When Notre Dame's male fencers take the strip again in mid-January, they will be trying to extend a streak of 106 regular-season victories, a record for the sport.

To the fencers at South Bend, the Four Horsemen are DeLandro, Langford, Melton and DeCicco—their coaches since 1934. That was the year in which Pedro DeLandro, seeking to strengthen a gimpy leg after an automobile crash, took up the sport and established it on campus. After DeLandro left in 1940, Walter Langford and then Herb Melton brought the team into prominence. Since taking over in 1962, DeCicco has estab-

A man who's rarely foiled

You can look it up: Mike DeCicco is Notre Dame's most successful coach

lished the Irish among the elite in the college ranks. He has done this without the benefit of a single scholarship, and, in fact, over the years only a handful of his fencers had competed in high school.

What Notre Dame fencers do have are the best training facilities in the country. This wasn't always true. "When I came here as a freshman," DeCicco recalls, "I had more gear than the university." The "facilities" were tucked beneath the old field-house stands. Now the well-equipped team operates out of the university's spacious Athletic and Convocation Center and the fencing room is large enough to accommodate the 60

or so prospects who come out each year.

Presiding over them is DeCicco who, although he is 52 and carries 210 pounds on a 5' 7½" frame, still moves lightly and deftly. He has a bubbly personality. Uncorked, Mike DeCicco fills a room with laughter and warmth. He is one of those rare individuals who can make "Glad to meet you" sound genuine.

"I've never met anybody like him," Sports Information Director Roger Valdiserri says. "People on campus call Mike and ask a favor of him, and he'll do whatever he can, no matter what hour of the day or night it is. If I just mention something that has to be done, he'll say, 'I'll do it for you.' I have to say, 'No, no, no. I didn't mean that.' Once I said, 'Gee, this house gets so hot in the summer.' Two days later I came home for lunch and found Mike in the cellar, where he had the furnace torn apart so he could hook up central air conditioning for me."

DeCicco grew up in Newark, N.J., where he began fencing—with a pool cue—engaging in imaginary matches in his bedroom. This left a lot of plaster on the floor and a gaping hole in the wall. At Notre Dame he became the only fencer ever to letter in all three weapons: foil in 1947, épée in 1948 (he was 29-1 and an All-America that season) and saber in 1949. His 61-20 career record and .795 winning percentage were the best by an Irish fencer up to that time. While at South Bend he started dating Polly Romeo, and in 1950 they were married. They have five children and live in a house off campus, in which DeCicco has a small library and phone in his bathroom. He often spends hours there, reading and taking care of work that he can't get to because of the bustle in his office. His favorite reading is anything about W. C. Fields, including old movie scripts, and collections of Andy Capp comic strips. "My heroes," says DeCicco.

For 23 years DeCicco, who holds the rank of professor, taught thermodynamics at Notre Dame and picked up patents for several items along the way. For many years he has also served as academic counselor to Notre Dame athletes. Two years ago he relinquished his

continued



DeCicco, who wants his athletes to enjoy themselves, hovers around with one of his favored manuals

John Hancock
John Hancock

John Hancock is fading. And fast.

With the help of all concerned citizens, John Hancock can be saved.

In 1873, the Hancock family of Massachusetts presented the largest single collection of John Hancock papers (which contains more than 21,000 letters, journals and account books relating to that famous patriot's personal and business affairs) to the New England Historic Genealogical Society.

Founded in 1845, the Society collects and preserves New England's local and family history. The John Hancock Collection, although stored with the utmost care, can no longer stand the ravages of time. Therefore, before it is too late, the Hancock Collection must be:

- repaired and preserved under the most careful procedures of paper conservation.

- inventoried for future scholars and researchers.
- put on microfilm and made available to all interested libraries.

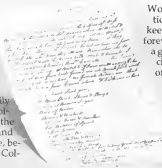
To do this will take Herculean effort and approximately \$25,000.

Won't you help save this collection right now. Your dollars to keep John Hancock from fading forever are urgently needed. For a gift of \$25.00 or more, the Society will send you a facsimile of a letter from Hancock to his wife Dorothy Quincy Hancock, dated 30 September 1783.

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teaching duties to concentrate on counseling. Including women athletes, DeCicco now advises some 500 students. Parsigian once said of him, "We could never operate our athletic program as smoothly without Mike."

On the back of DeCicco's office door is a pennant bearing one of Fields' most memorable lines: ANYONE WHO HATES KIDS AND DOGS CAN'T BE ALL BAD. But much as DeCicco admires Fields, he disagrees with him about kids. The Notre Dame fencing room may be crowded and noisy—adding a women's team seven years ago didn't help—but DeCicco cannot bring himself to cut anyone.

"Lou Krug is a classic example of why I never cut a fencer," he says, nodding at the 5' 3" Krug, who has stopped by the office for a chat. "Lou's not the athlete that some others are, and he'd never even seen fencing until he came here. But he's very bright. To earn a monogram, a fencer must be in at least 50% of our meets and must win more than half of those. After Lou finally got his monogram as a senior, it took him about three microseconds to get on the phone and call home." DeCicco smiles broadly; clearly, he savors the sense of achievement Krug found.

"I still can't quite believe it," Krug says. "I'm so small. The only reason I even went out for fencing was because my roommate signed up for it and I decided to go along with him."

"Signing up" is the core of DeCicco's recruiting and consists simply of bulletin-board notices inviting anyone and everyone to show up when fencing practice begins in September.

An even more extreme case than Krug's is that of Don Tadrowski. DeCicco considered cutting him as a freshman because "he was so gangly, uncoordinated and lacking in physical skills. He'd never fenced and I was sure he never would for us." But DeCicco let him stay, and 18 months later Tadrowski took the 1955 NCAA épée title, the first of six individual championships won by DeCicco's pupils.

If there is any disagreement between DeCicco and his fencers, it is that he feels they should get the credit for their accomplishments, and they feel he should. "Coach DeCicco is a maestro, a master of the sport," says Chris Lyons of Berwyn, Pa., the captain of the saber squad. "When you've finished a lesson with him, you feel you've accomplished

something. He realizes it takes time for a novice to pick up points, so he works patiently until you achieve perfection."

DeCicco contends—and most people in the sport agree—that a fencer's progress is an direct proportion to his or her intelligence. "Because this is a sport of wins, of constant thinking and planning, the more intelligent a person is, the better fencer he will become," he says. So perhaps it is no coincidence that among Notre Dame's athletes, fencers almost always rank scholastically at or near the top.

Another factor in the team's success is DeCicco's training program, in which fencers feed what they have learned to one another. "After his first year, almost every fencer is a coach," DeCicco says. "He teaches others because fencers before him took time to teach him. It's a beautiful process."

Preparing the fencers for competition involves a conditioning regimen that DeCicco insists "is second to none on campus, not even the football team's." The program includes extensive calisthenics, weightlifting and lots of running—long jaunts to build endurance and sprints to prepare for the short, quick lunges called for in bouts.

After many successful seasons, DeCicco's squad won the 1977 NCAA title at, appropriately enough, South Bend, New York University—the perennial big blade in collegiate fencing—and the Irish had tied for first place, and there was a fence-off. Suberman Mike Sullivan put Notre Dame ahead with a leadoff win, and Pat Gerard added a foil victory to seal the team's first championship. A year later the Irish made it two in a row.

Last March Notre Dame had a chance to become the first team to gain a third successive NCAA title, while Sullivan was going after a record third straight individual championship. Alas, Wayne State edged out Notre Dame, and Yuri Rabinovich of the Tartars, who had been beaten out by Sullivan for saber honors in 1977, dealt him his fourth loss in 130 collegiate bouts in a fence-off for first.

Understandably, Sullivan was disheartened. But looking back in his days at Notre Dame, he takes pride in his development both as a fencer and, perhaps more so, as a person. "Coach DeCicco did more for me than anyone," Sullivan says. "My parents were divorced while I was a freshman. I was 1,000 miles from

home and in a bad state of mind—depressed. But Coach DeCicco made me feel like a son. As a freshman I was 53-1, which is the most wins anyone has ever had in a season before the NCAAs. When I came here I had never fenced for a team, only as an individual, and even though I won all those bouts that first year, I know I wasn't inspiring to the team. I was never rah-rah, never did any cheering for others. By the time I was a senior, though, I had learned how to become a real part of the team."

DeCicco's rapport with his fencers transcends conventional coach-pupil relationships. "If you lost, you felt terrible because you felt you had let Coach down," says Ron Solitto, who graduated in 1972 and is now a physician in Ridgefield Park, N.J. "You knew he'd never hold that loss against you, but you wanted to win so much because he's such a fantastic person. He's also a master psychologist. During my sophomore year we were losing 13-12 at Princeton, with two matches left. My family and girl friend were there. I had never competed, but Coach chose that moment to shout, 'Ronnie, warm up.' He wanted me. I felt like getting my Superman uniform. I won, Coach smothered me with his Italian Hug—something I'd been longing for—and we won the match."

The Italian Hug. It is something all Irish fencers long for. In administering the Hug, DeCicco clasps a hand behind the fencer's neck, pulls down and applies a combination cheek-to-cheek rub and hearty embrace. The Irish find it far more rewarding than a handshake or a pat on the rump.

"One of the nicest things about the Hug is that it's so spontaneous," says Greg Arm, an épée man. "Coach DeCicco doesn't care if you've won or lost. If he feels you've done your best, you'll get the Hug from the Italian Peter Pan."

That nickname was given to the coach 20 years ago by Fencer Mike Bishko. "Notre Dame issued green shorts back then," DeCicco explains. "Oh, this is embarrassing. Well, Mary Martin was big at that time and when Bishko saw me in my green shorts..." Since then it has been a tradition for the team to render the following chant at the final away meet each season:

Who's our man?

He's our man.

He's the Italian Peter Pan

That's Mike DeCicco.

END

Warning: The Surgeon General Has Determined
That Cigarette Smoking Is Dangerous to Your Health.

Source comparative tar and nicotine figures: FTC Report May 1978. Of All
Brands Sold. Lowest tar, 0.5 mg./tar, 0.05 mg. nicotine av. per cigarette.
Golden Lights: 8 mg./tar, 0.7 mg. nicotine av. per cigarette by FTC Method.



Golden Lights[™] taste astonishes first-time users.

Unbelievable taste from a low tar surprises smokers.
Many switch to Golden Lights after trying just one pack.



17
MG TAR
1.0 MG. NIC.



20
MG TAR
1.2 MG. NIC.



16
MG TAR
1.1 MG. NIC.



17
MG TAR
1.4 MG. NIC.



17
MG TAR
1.2 MG. NIC.



16
MG TAR
1.1 MG. NIC.



19
MG TAR
1.3 MG. NIC.



8
MG TAR
0.7 MG. NIC.

Golden Lights.
The taste high tar smokers
want in a low tar.
(Regular & Menthol)

A HERO FOR ALL



TIMES

Out of print, but enduring, are the 23 novels by legendary coach Clair Bee about the equally legendary Chip Hilton

by Jack McCallum



CONTINUED

William "Chip" Hilton felt as though all the scrubs and half the varsity were using him for a pillow. He could scarcely breathe, but in spite of his discomfort, he felt a glow of satisfaction. The football was safely cradled against his ribs.

These were the first of some one million words that Clair Bee wrote in his series of Chip Hilton books for boys. *Touchdown Pass, Book One*. I began reading it on Christmas Day 1959, when I was 10.

Ah, Chip, where have you gone, you and your great natural talent? And where's Speed Morris, your mercurial sidekick with the beat-up jalopy? And Soapy Smith, your redheaded, joking-through-thick-and-thin comrade? And Biggie Cohen, the first baseman with ham hocks for hands?

And where, oh where, is Hank Rockwell, that tough but warmhearted coach of football, basketball, baseball and life's lessons, a man who was equal parts Rockne, Landry, Shula and saint.

Excuse me, please. Very out of date of me to be pining for storybook characters. Unhealthy. Suppose my sons were to find out? But they were there once—alive on the pages and in my imagination. Now they're gone, and I watch Jimmy the Greek on TV. Coach Hank Rockwell would not have liked Jimmy the Greek. Would have reminded him of the "ele-

PHOTOGRAPHS BY EVELYN FLORET



Bee, 83, lives in Roscoe, N.Y. with his books and mementoes of his coaching career.

ment" that Chip and Rockwell had to deal with in *Pitchers' Duel* (Book Six).

The time has come to reveal who I am, I think of myself as the world's greatest expert on Chip Hilton books, which might not get me a tumble in *The New York Review of Books* or a table at Elaine's, but at least it means something to people my age. A college friend once challenged my supremacy during a late-night literary discussion that was fueled, as I recall, by a case of Colt .45. The clincher was this: he could name the "touchdown twins" in *Triple Threat Trouble* (Book 18), but he didn't know which twin ran to the left (Eddie Aker) and which to the right (Jack Jacobs). I did. My title was secure.

My generation, born in the late 1940s, was the last to buy (or ask for) the Hilton books that Bee cranked out in the 1940s and '50s. We were the last of a breed, too, because the Hilton series was the last of its kind, the final representative of what might be called the Frank Merriwell genre, which is now deadlier than the d.a. haircut. Under the name Burt L. Standish, Gilbert Patten began writing Merriwell stories in 1896 for Street & Smith, a leading publisher of dime novels and nickel magazines. During the first 20 years of this century, his stories were more widely read than any others for boys, and "Merriwell finish" entered the language as a stock description for a dramatic ending to a game.

After Frank Merriwell became "too old," Patten embarked on a Dick Merriwell series, made possible by the discovery of Frank's half brother, a contrivance that would have made James Fenimore Cooper cringe. Similar series followed (*Dink Stover* by Owen Johnson was one of the most popular), including the Gary Grayson and Baseball Joe books churned out by the Stratemeyer syndicate, which later produced the Hardy Boys and Nancy Drew and other successful juvenile novels. The Hilton books and the 11-volume Bronc Burnett series, written by Wilfred McCormick, were the last of the athletic breed that started with Frank Merriwell.

You can't get Chip Hilton books anymore. The 1979 edition of *Books in Print* lists only one title by Clair Bee, and that is *Make the Team in Basketball*, one of 19 technical books on sport also written by the former Long Island University basketball coach. The Strand Book Store in New York City, which specializes in out-of-print volumes, has none of the Hilton series on its shelves. Bee himself used to have about 500 Hilton books lying around, but after years of lending them out here and there, he doesn't even own a complete set. About the only place to find a Hilton book now is at a flea market, among old *National Geographics*.

I therefore sense the importance of the moment. This may be the last piece ever written about the Chip Hilton books. It may also be the first, because Chip never spawned a cottage industry of nostalgic scholarship like that which grew out of the Merriwell stories. Grosset & Dunlap, which published Chip Hilton and Bronc Burnett and a lot of other juvenile sports fiction, no longer employs any of the editors who worked on the Hilton books, can't remember who they were and, frankly, doesn't seem to care very much. Obviously, Bee doesn't mean as much to Grosset & Dunlap as Ernest Hemingway does to Scribners. And no one at G&D seems able to explain precisely why Chip Hilton and boys' sports books in general are a dead issue while the Hardy Boys, abetted by their TV series, are thriving to the tune of \$5 million in sales each year. To be fair, it must be admitted that Dave Lande, vice-president of special marketing for G&D, does have a theory. "Kids don't read sports fiction anymore," he says, "because they get real athletes on television. Their interest today is in the stars. The real-life stars. Like O. J. Simpson, people like that. They don't want to read fiction."

My set of Hilton books, all 23 of them, occupies a featured place on my bookshelves. Perhaps they look a little out of place nestling as they do next to a copy

of Martin Esslin's *The Theatre of The Absurd*, but not really, not in a collection that places *Ball Four* above *Lord Jim*. Besides, if you're going to say things like "Don't you think Artaud is fantastic?" and then snicker at *Touchdown Pass*, I don't want you looking at my books. Modern drama was college. Hilton was boyhood, for gosh sakes, as Chip used to say.

Ah, those hours with Chip. Until I was 17 and entered a period of intellectual snobbery, I always had a Hilton book stashed in the bathroom, which, as we all know, is where the real reading material is kept. Twenty-three books and five or more readings of each. Is it any wonder I can tell you without looking the starting lineups of Chip's high school and college teams? In all three sports.

I've tried to imagine the Hilton series with "contemporary themes," a kind of *The Young and the Restless* set in a gymnasium. The star basketball guard getting the captain of the cheerleading squad pregnant, for example. (That was the subject of a *White Shadow* episode last season.) Or the menacing linebacker with a big Qualade problem. Things that Hank Rockwell never had to deal with. But, then, with those kinds of themes you wouldn't have a Chip Hilton sports series. You wouldn't be merchandising what G&D and those other publishers were selling in those old books—heroism. Sure, O. J. Simpson was a hero, but he took his heroism to the marketplace. We saw him on the field, but we also see him running through airports and we see him on *The Dinah Shore Show*. William (Chip) Hilton, who never had a tax shelter in Florida, was—is a hero for all times.

At some points the Bee books flirted with issues. *Hoop Crazy* (Book Five) was about a white town's reluctance to accept a black basketball player. *Tournament Crisis* (Book 14) had a similar theme—Occidental prejudice against an Oriental player. *Ten Seconds To Play* (Book 12) involved a football player's psychosis, the manifestation of which was his inability to catch the slant-in

continued

Chip Hilton continued



Seton Hall star Bob Davies, now living in Florida, was Bee's prototype for Chip.

pass. And to Bee's credit, Hilton's team occasionally lost, although all manner of extraordinary stuff had to occur for that to happen. Like a swinging hunt hitting a pebble and rolling back into fair ground in *Pitchers' Duel*. Or a player on the opposing team kicking the ball away from Chip's team for a safety in *Triple Threat Trouble*. Or the all-time classic: a basketball deflating on the rim in *Hoop Crazy*.

But the essence of the series was that a champion like Chip will usually win ... and that he will usually do so in the final seconds. That is good heroism and good sports fiction.

My desire to talk to Bee, the man who had woven this spell of words over me many years ago, came suddenly one afternoon last year. For a long time I had assumed that he was gone, like my boyhood reading habits. But the LIU athletic office told me that he was living in Roscoe, N.Y., a village in the foothills of

the Catskills not far from Kutsher's resort hotel, with which Bee has been associated for a long time and where he often coached in the off-season. Campers at Kutsher's Sports Academy, in fact, now play basketball in the Clair F. Bee Fieldhouse.

It took me a long time to get around to dialing Bee's number. A phone call across the miles is no problem, but one across time is something else again. We've all made one: "Hello, you'll never guess ... I was just thinking when ..." and it usually doesn't work out. And why was I making the call? To find again the secret spot in my imagination where only the Hilton books could take me? Or was it to recapture the essence of a simpler time, of which Chip Hilton was a part? That was it. I couldn't go back to Cub Scouts or dance cheek-to-cheek in the gym or talk to my friend who died in Vietnam, but I could talk to Bee, this link to my boyhood. Was that fair—to intrude on his privacy to recapture a bit of my own? And what if he disappointed me? What if he was too old now and remembered very little of the Hilton books? What if they weren't very important to him? What if he said, "Oh, the Hilton books? I just wrote them for the money." It was with the you-can't-go-home-again leitmotif running through my brain that I finally dialed the number.

"Is this Clair Bee?"

"Yes, it is," a thin voice on the other end replied.

I suddenly recalled the story of Budd Schulberg and F. Scott Fitzgerald. One day in Hollywood the young Schulberg, who had long worshiped Fitzgerald's writing, found himself unexpectedly working on a script with his faded idol. His first words to Fitzgerald were, "Oh, I thought you were dead." I didn't blow it quite that badly, although I did tell Bee, "I was surprised to find you." But I quickly recovered and asked him if I could visit him. "Sure thing," he said. "I'd love to talk about the books. Why don't you come up?"

Chip and his freshman pals could have warned the eager athletes that Henry Rockwell was a Simon Legree when it came to mastering athletic skills, that every minute of every practice session would be grueling work ... Rockwell's

continued





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Chip Hilton continued

voice was sharp and strong and came clear as a bell to the spectators in the bleachers as he counted for the hard-running shooting drills: "One, two, and up! One, two, and up!"

—BACKBOARD FEVER (Book 10)

"Yes," Bee said with a smile that came from long ago, "Rockwell was me, I was the coach. Not exactly, you know, but I had myself in mind. I guess I couldn't help making it that way."

We were sitting at the C.B. Ranch in the hills near Roscoe. It was a bright warm day but it was dark in the house, and Bee was wearing a sport coat and sweater. His blood was very thin, he said. He was still not quite sure why someone would travel more than a hundred miles to talk about the books he had written so long ago, but he was glad to talk and the memories came tumbling out. He said it was better for him to talk because he could hardly see. He was 83—an old 83.

But the mind, ah, the Clair Bee mind, was still razor-sharp. No, he can no longer dash to the blackboard and instantly sketch a winning game plan—something he was known for at LIU—but he can still talk basketball for hours, his knowledge of the basics cutting across the decades since he was an active coach. He was, in fact, currently working on a five-part instructional basketball series for Medalist Industries, sending out cassettes of what Rockwell used to call "chalk talk."

Many have called Bee the greatest basketball mind ever, so it was natural that he would take himself as the model for his fictional coach. He probably never met a better one. He coached many sports, although he is best remembered for his basketball teams at LIU from 1932 to 1951, where he once won 43 straight games over two seasons. In more than 20 years of coaching basketball at Rider College in New Jersey and at LIU, Bee

won 82.7% of his games, the best percentage ever. He originated the 1-3-1 zone defense, and his suggestions led to the three-second rule. Bee claims to have thought up the 24-second clock, too, though Danny Biasone, the owner of the Syracuse Nats, is generally given most of the credit.

The dates and characters of the Hilton books were rather fuzzy to him now but Bee tried to sort them out.

"I remember that I wrote the first book as a novelty," he said. "A friend of mine said to take it over to Grosset & Dunlap and let them look at it. They liked it right away, but they wanted a series. So I wrote two more for them, one for each sports season. From the beginning, they sold like crazy."

"The inspiration to write came from those 5¢ paperbacks. I was brought up on them. Nick Carter was one set. Frank Merriwell. God, I loved those. Then Dick Merriwell. I read them all. I'd read all



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night. I'd take a candle or lantern and put it by the side of my bed."

I hadn't needed a candle, but I told Bee that I sometimes read his books all night, too, sneaking into the bathroom and sitting on the commode so I'd have an excuse if a parent came investigating.

"You don't say," Bee said. "Why, that makes me happy. Very happy."

Only one rock has been thrown. One of the younger boys had hurled wide of the mark and the rock had skipped ahead of Chip and bounced down the street. Chip had not turned, nor had he quickened his pace. A shower of rocks would not have accelerated his deliberate withdrawal.

—TOUCHDOWN PASS

Bee was born near Clarkshurg, W. Va., and raised in Grafton, a mountain town. About 10 miles away was the town of Valley Falls, which Bee took for the

setting of the first eight books in the series, the ones in which Chip attends high school.

"Out behind the mountain was a level place near the Monongahela River we called Big Rock, and that's where we used to swim and play. You really weren't called a man until you dived off that rock," Bee said. "My outfit was the Hill-toppers. We'd have gang fights and chase each other with rocks. I was the leader, even though I was one of the smaller ones. I'd place rocks by certain trees so we'd know where to get supplies if we got attacked by another group. That's the way it was. It wasn't easy."

Bee had his own boyhood in mind when he wrote the high school part of the series, but he did a remarkable job of keeping regionalism out of the books. I always had a vague idea that Valley Falls was in Connecticut. One of my friends thought it was in Michigan, and another thought it was in California, al-

though he had some difficulty explaining the blizzard in *Hoop Crazy*.

"I didn't know whether I could tell a mountain story," Bee said, "because then I'd have to get into all the characteristics of the mountaineers, which is very difficult because of the language and so forth. So I tried to make Valley Falls sound like it could be anywhere."

Anywhere was the setting for Chip's heroics at State College, too. Because Bee spent most of his life on college campuses, he had little trouble creating that atmosphere. All the stock characters are there—the nasty coaches who served as a foil to Rockwell, the intruding alumni and parents from whom Rockwell would take "no guff," the good-hearted but often overbearing members of the booster club, etc. Bee knew these people and he used them well. It is revealing that Bee chose a quiet small-town setting for State College, though he had spent most of his college-coaching career in a big

continued



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city. Before he married, he lived in a hotel in New York, and it was in the bright spotlight of Madison Square Garden that LIU won its greatest victories. But it was also there that the shadow of the college basketball scandals of the 1950s fell on LIU, and it was toward a less complex college life that this mountain boy from West Virginia aspired.

"I always dreamed of being a college president, maybe at a small college," said Bee. "And I would've been a good one. I know I could raise money. I was comptroller at LIU, and I was comptroller and assistant to the president at Waynesburg College [back in the '20s, while he was still a student at the Pennsylvania school]. I knew all the angles. Of my ambitions in life, I think I made most of them. All except that one."

"Who's that guy? That 44?"

"That's Hilton! All-State! Best quarterback in the country!"

"You can say that again! Kicks off, makes the tackle, recovers the fumble, and passes for a touchdown!"

"And kicks the goal! He's terrific!"

—A PASS AND A PRAYER (Book Seven)

It was from his coaching experiences rather than from his boyhood that Bee drew the character of Chip Hilton. Bee's model was Bob Davies, a great all-round athlete for Seton Hall when Bee was coaching at LIU.

"I used Bobby as the hero," said Bee, "because I think that's the best way to write—to take a living person. I admired Bobby very much, even though I didn't coach him. Bobby's teams never beat us, but I respected and admired him."

It is even possible that the whole idea for the Hilton series arose out of the 1941 National Invitation Basketball Tournament in Madison Square Garden. Davies' Seton Hall team brought a 43-game winning streak into the semifinals against LIU, but Bee ordered his players to double-team Davies, and the other Seton Hall players couldn't pick up the slack.

"I told my players to talk to him all the time," Bee said, describing a bit of strategy that Rockwell undoubtedly would have considered unsportsmanlike. "You know, 'Shoot, Bobby! Dribble, Bobby! Things like that. No profanity, understand. I didn't tolerate that. But I

think it got to him a little bit, and we held him down." With Davies scoring only four points and eventually fouling out, LIU won 49-26 and went on to beat Ohio 56-42 in the finals.

Because Davies was the fair-haired boy of New York City basketball, the press criticized Bee for his team's street-smart tactics. Reporters claimed the LIU players had sworn at Davies in an effort to rattle him. Davies defended Bee and later wrote him a letter saying that he held no grudges and that everything in the game had been aboveboard.

THE CHIP HILTON SERIES

1. TOUCHDOWN PASS
2. CHAMPIONSHIP BALL
3. STRIKE THREE
4. CLUTCH HITTER
5. HOOF CRAZY
6. PITCHERS' DUEL
7. A PASS AND A PRAYER
8. DUGOUT JUNK
9. FRESHMAN QUARTERBACK
10. BACKCOURT FEVER
11. FENCE BUSTERS
12. TEN SECONDS TO PLAY
13. FOURTH DOWN SHOWDOWN
14. TOURNAMENT CRISIS
15. HARDSHIRT UPSET
16. PAY-OFF PITCH
17. NO-HITTER
18. TRIPLE-THREAT TROUBLE
19. BACKCOURT ACE
20. BUZZER BASKET
21. COMEBACK CAGERS
22. HOME RUN FIELD
23. HUNGRY HURLER

It was the poise Davies displayed in that game and afterward that moved Bee some years later to choose him as the model for Chip Hilton.

Davies didn't discover that until the series had long been a huge success. "I stopped in to see Clair on a business trip in 1957," says Davies, who now lives in Coral Springs, Fla., where he is in sales and promotion. "He gave me one of those books for my son, Jimmy. It was a football story. I had heard of the books, but I'd never heard anyone make the connection between me and Chip Hilton. I remember reading a chapter or two of

the book, but I can't recall which book it was. It's kind of strange, isn't it, that I've never read an entire Chip Hilton book? But I was too old for them by then."

Davies was an ideal model. He starred in four sports at John Harris High School in Harrisburg, Pa., and the Boston Red Sox had signed him to an option contract. But after two years at Seton Hall as an All-America guard, Davies could write his own ticket in basketball and, after four years in the Navy, he went on to play 10 years in the NBA with the Royals. He's enshrined in the Basketball Hall of Fame in Springfield, Mass., as is, of course, Bee.

"Clair was the smartest basketball mind that ever lived," says Davies, whose respect for Bee parallels Chip's for Rockwell. "Hank Iba, I think, was second, but Clair was far and away the best. You know what he'd do? If he got behind in the first quarter, at the start of the second he'd put in the scrubs and take the first five into the locker room and, on a blackboard, run through what everybody had to do. And that was that. When they came back out, they were in charge. The game was over, period."

Oddly, I had come across a picture of Davies in his Seton Hall uniform a few years ago, before I knew about the Hilton connection, and I was struck then by how closely he matched the description of Chip that Bee had so painstakingly rendered in each of the books: tall, blue eyes, blond hair, wide sloping shoulders. Both Davies and Hilton were Golden Boys.

The fact that I was drawn to the Hilton character isn't surprising, I suppose. Athletically, Chip was everything I wanted to be but wasn't. As a football player at Valley Falls, he started out as a fullback in the single wing. By Chapter 3 of the first book Rockwell had moved him, inevitably, to quarterback in a T formation. From there, he ran, passed and kicked like no one since . . . well, since Merriwell. In basketball, he was a center in high school and later a forward, but he became a big guard in college. His main problem there, as you might suspect, was that he was too unselfish and unwilling to use his one-on-one ability. He would never have dribbled behind his back, a technique employed in the 1941

NIT by a player named Bob Davies. In baseball, Chip started out as a catcher—proving, as a hero must, that he could do it in the trenches—and ended up, again inevitably, as a pitcher with all the pitches. Bee never had Chip participate in any minor sports, although he did use his swimming skills to save a drowning boy in *Ten Seconds To Play*. The main thing about Chip was that he was smooth. Bronc Burnett, as his name implies, was a line-busting running back in football and a flame-throwing pitcher in baseball. He was too brutish for my money. This was borne out by the fact that he didn't play basketball. You have to be smooth to play basketball.

So he [Chip] stood his ground, his arms hanging loosely at his sides, content to let Tug take the initiative. But he made one last effort to avoid the fight. "Keep in mind, Tug," he said evenly, "that you're forcing me to fight. I'd still like to call it off."

... Chip met his hanging opponent more than halfway, driving inside Tug's grasping arms and smashing two heavy blows into Tug's face. Tug grabbed and held on and then wrestled Chip to the ground. But it was Chip who landed on top and straddled Tug's thick trunk with his long legs.

Tug tried to cover up, expecting Chip to batter away at his face, but Chip merely held his arms until Rankin ceased his struggles. Then Chip got up, picked up his sweater, and walked away without a word.

—A PASS AND A PRAYER

And then there was this—Chip could take care of himself. That was the great unspoken aspiration of the males of my generation, or perhaps of any generation. In many of the books, Chip would be forced beyond all human capacity for pacifism to take care of himself, and this he would do with great dispatch, as Bee did himself on the hills of Grafton. But there was no rock throwing for Chip. After a fight, he inevitably gave thanks to his late father, Big Chip, for his early boxing lessons at the YMCA. There was an air of civility about all of Chip's battles, even when he was involved in an alley fight in *Fourth Down Showdown* (Book 13) or when he took care of not one but

two small-time hoodlums in both *Ten Seconds To Play* and *Hungry Hunger* (Book 23).

He [Chip] found himself staring into the lovely brown eyes of Peggy Armstrong. He didn't realize it until he saw the girl flush and turn her eyes away. There was a great deal that Chip did not know about girls ... He'd always regarded girls as just a lot of noise and nuisance. Now, he knew he'd been right on that score all along ... A lot of noise and nuisance!

—CLUTCH HITTER (Book Four)

About the only failure Chip ever had was with the opposite sex. Well, it couldn't be called a failure really; he just never "took it up." Though there was nothing resembling heavy breathing in the Merriwell series, Patten at least gave his hero Inza Burrage, "a brunette beauty," whom Merriwell later married, and Elsie Bellwood, "the exotic blonde daughter of an old sea captain," who turned his head for a while. In retrospect, the weakness of the Hilton books, written long after the Victorian Age, with which Patten had had to contend, was that none of the characters ever became romantically involved. Except for Soapy Smith's occasional slaverings over Mitz Savrill—the little number who worked as a cashier at State Drug—Chip and his buddies might have been preparing for the priesthood. The only date Chip ever had occurred in *Ten Seconds To Play*, and that was only because he was using the date as a roundabout way of getting at a problem that had nothing to do with girls. Bee conceded this weakness and said that in his outlines of future Chip Hilton books, which were never published, he did get the hero "married off." Three sports can sustain you just so long, even if you do have a job on the side.

"When I was a boy on the hill in Grafton," Bee said, "we didn't have time for girls. Football, basketball, baseball, running and rock wars. Somebody at Grosset & Dunlap wanted me to get some female characters in there, so I came up with one [the aforementioned Mitz], but I had no real desire to do it."

The one female character who appears throughout the series is Chip's mother. Compared to Mary Hilton, Mother Te-

resa is a cold-hearted, indifferent coid. The perspicacity of Mary Hilton's decisions was surpassed only by the fluffiness of her chocolate cakes. And it was her small salary as a telephone operator that helped send Chip through college (he wouldn't accept an athletic scholarship), although she and Chip had both been tempted by big bucks. In *Dogour Jinx* (Book Eight) an unscrupulous scout named Gabby Breen used what he called "the old suitcase trick" to try to get Chip to sign a professional baseball contract. As Chip and Mary looked on in amazement, the scout held a valise over his head and showered the carpet of their "modest home" in Valley Falls with a thousand \$5 bills. ("Why, \$5,000 would pay off the mortgage on the house. Pay it in full. And if Breen got him a big league contract, why he'd get another bonus and his mother could stop working ... forever!") Chip, of course, turned the loot down, and his mother was overcome with pride because Chip "had proved he was big enough to turn away from a tempting shortcut to fame and fortune."

And there is no question about who presented Bee with the model for the Mary Hilton character. "My mother was the only teacher I ever had," he said, obviously moved by the memory of her. "She was a brilliant woman but she died very young. She had consumption, and we had to travel around from place to place because of her health. I can remember burning the bloody rags she coughed into. It was rough for my mother. And I loved her very much."

Bee loved his mother, loved sports and loved to write. And the books gave Bee, a shrewd businessman, a pretty good nest egg. But while all these factors contributed to his creative impulse, it goes deeper than that.

... Chip was sitting by the window, gazing far out over the city toward the New Campus Inn and thinking about Jimmy's fervent hopes and dreams for this night. And all at once Chip's spirits lifted and his heart sang with a great confidence.

—TOURNAMENT CRISIS

The man who wrote that wrote it unflinchingly. Everyone's heart always sings with a great confidence at the end of a Hilton story, and the mixed metaphors

continued

be damned. There is no gray area, no glimmer of doubt, when you close the book. Things are all right and would always be all right, because Bee wanted it that way.

But in real life everything was not always all right for Bee. On this most idealistic of coaches fell the shadow of the college basketball scandals. Bee himself was not involved in a fix, of course—that was about as likely an occurrence in the 1940s as John Wooden's joining the SDS in the 1960s—but Bee's great forward at LIU, Sherman White, confessed. And though other schools were more deeply involved than LIU—like the entire 1950-51 Cunderella team of CCNY and the Alex Groza-Ralph Beard Kentucky club of which Adolph Rupp had said, "They couldn't touch our boys with a 10-foot pole"—nobody was more devastated by the scandal than Bee. As Neil D. Isaacs wrote in *All the Moves: A History of College Basketball*, "LIU was perhaps hardest hit, because Clair Bee took it to heart. He spoke as a moralist, taking the responsibility for not teaching or communicating with his players; yet his very moralism acted as protective blinders against the intrusion of unpleasant realities in the total environment of his sporting world... he could not rationalize away the burdens of guilt."

Bee has had more than 25 years to forget the scandals, but he never has. He was still writing the Hilton series—specifically, the college books—about the time they broke, but he never made the scandal part of his fiction.

"I thought about putting it in," he said, "because I figured nobody could write it as well as I could. But, then, I don't know... Maybe today if I was writing I would have done it. But it didn't seem right, you know?"

On his wall is an illustration of a good-looking blond boy. Grosset & Dunlap had it drawn according to Bee's description of Chip Hilton, and it was used on the jackets and occasionally elsewhere in the books. Bee glanced at the portrait.

"Disillusioned? Oh, if anybody ever got disillusioned, it was me. I didn't believe it. I couldn't believe that anything like that went on. You know, Bobby Knight of Indiana and I are very close, but I disagree with some of the things I've heard him say about today's ath-

letes. He had that trouble with the drugs on his team last season, and he said afterward that he believed there was going to be a breakdown in organized sports because of the use of drugs in high school and college. I didn't believe that then and I don't believe it now. I can't believe it. I have to believe there will always be enough players of good character to stop such things. O.K., Bobby may have had firsthand experience with it, but I still have to feel that a boy in sports is basically clean. And I hate to see a coach even admit that sort of thing is possible."

I pointed to the portrait and asked Bee if he felt there were still athletes like that out there somewhere.

"Yes, I believe there are," he said. "I believe there are."

Bee met Ernest Hemingway, an idealist of a somewhat different cast, when Bee was conducting a basketball clinic in Cuba two decades ago. Bee had already written several of the Hilton stories, and he told Hemingway he wanted to write other things, too, and was considering taking courses at NYU or Columbia. "Don't take courses in writing," Hemingway told him, "Write!"

"I remember that day very well," Bee said. "Hemingway showed me the tower at the beach house where he wrote. He said he wrote every day. That's very important. To succeed at writing, you've got to do it every day. Out there in that office of mine I've got drawers full of plots. I used to tuck them away, hoping that one day I'd have the time to get back to them, write short stories and things like that. Now I have the time and I can't see to do it."

Tears formed in the corners of those old eyes.

"Yep, I put it off and I can't help but think that I really failed as a writer. I never did all the things I wanted to."

One of the things Bee desperately wanted to do was keep the price of his Chip Hilton books at \$1. But they went up in price, first by 25%, then 50%, then 100%. And they stopped selling. The outlines of future Hilton books (when Chip would venture to Cleveland and become a sportswriter) remained in the desk drawer.

"Sure, sales went down," Bee said. "There was radio and television. And kids couldn't pay as much as they were asking. Why, the books weren't worth \$2. Even in my mind today I don't think they're worth \$2."

His eyes misted over again.

"I think about getting them out in paperback. You know, sell them cheap. I think they'd go good. I don't know, but I think they would."

No, they probably wouldn't go good. They probably wouldn't sell at all. And the Hiltons still in circulation will never become collector's items of the class of, say, an original Merriwell. People like me, who wouldn't sell a Hilton for \$500, are few and far between. But I wanted to tell Bee that he shouldn't worry about that and, most of all, that he shouldn't think of himself as a failed writer. Most writers don't do as well.

My time with him had been more than I had expected, a kind of reverse initiation rite that few are privileged to go through. In some novels and short stories the protagonist makes a kind of quantum leap into manhood and in the process puts away his childish things—which presumably would include his Chip Hilton books. But I have long thought that manhood appears or, rather, boyhood recedes in layers. Just as you tear away the leaves of an artichoke to reach the heart, so must you tear away the leaves of boyhood before you become a man. As long as you do not let all the layers of boyhood be stripped away, you are not totally a man, and there is something very comforting about that. That is why, since I returned from my visit with Bee, there has been a Hilton book in my bathroom, just as there was 20 years ago. The current one is, let's see, *Strike Three* (Book Three). It ends like this:

Chip tightened his grip on the shoulders of the two South-Siders. All the worries and trouble had been worth-while, after all! He was glad he had persisted in his efforts to win the friendship of these two. They were really on the team now. The eyes of the three boys met and they exchanged winks. Then, arm in arm, they turned toward the dugout where Rockwell stood with a happy smile and an outstretched hand.



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- 4293 Bert Jones
- 4294 Dave Casper
- 4295 Terry Bradshaw

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Edited by GAY FLOOD

SPORTSMEN

Sir:

The portraits by Walter Ioss Jr. of Sportsman of the Year Willie Stargell and Terry Bradshaw (Dec. 24-31) were brilliant. The warmth, admiration and good cheer emanating from the cover photograph alone were striking, a wordless evocation of the Pirates' 1979 anthem *We Are Family*. And whoever thought of posing the two in a steel mill should get a medal—never before has the spiritual link between a community and its sporting representatives been so vividly captured. You have given us not only the Sportsman of the Year, but also the pictures of the year.

MARK GROSSMAN
Minneapolis

Sir:

Thank you, Ron Fimmet! The article on Willie Stargell, Terry Bradshaw and the city of Pittsburgh (*Two Champs from the City of Champions*) was excellent, terrific, superb! His praise for Pittsburgh is truly appreciated.

However, in giving credit, you forgot a few more of the city's champions: the Pittsburgh Triangles, winners of the World Team Tennis title a few years back, the Ochsene Dukes, who have one of the highest winning percentages in college basketball and who, during the '70s, won the first Eastern Eight crown (1977); and Ochsene's 1973 national champs in club football.

Even if our Steelers don't begin the '80s by again winning the Super Bowl, we fans have a lot to be thankful for: a successful decade and a nice tribute to two of our stars.

JOE KUBIK
McKees Rocks, Pa.

Sir:

Congratulations on choosing two great performers, Terry Bradshaw and Willie Stargell are perhaps the most team-oriented players in sports. Each is a sportsman in every way.

JOHN MOLORI
Methuen, Mass.

Sir:

After the way you blew your Sportsman of the Year award last year by picking Jack Nicklaus over Ron Guldry, I am pleased you have redeemed yourselves with your selection of Willie Stargell and Terry Bradshaw. Two better choices couldn't have been made.

MARC BERNBAUM
Philadelphia

Sir:

I wholeheartedly agree with the choice of Willie Stargell. But Terry Bradshaw? You must be kidding.

JACK O'CONNOR
Clarksville, Tenn.

Sir:

That's so typical of Willie Stargell to be smiling (on your cover) when he is sharing something with someone else.

GEORGE HAINES
Gladwyne, Pa.

Sir:

Terry Bradshaw's own teammates did not see fit to select him as the Steelers' most valuable player. Instead, they selected Huntsville John Stallworth. Your Paul Zimmerman (*The Gospel According to Paul*, Dec. 24-31) didn't even put Bradshaw on the SPORTS ILLUSTRATED All-Pro team. Come on, wise up!

BILL KLING JR.
Huntsville, Ala.

Sir:

Terry Bradshaw deserves every bit of recognition he gets. What a great athlete and person! I'd call him Sportsman of the Decade.

KATHY MAREKO
Bronx, N.Y.

Sir:

Do you really feel that Stargell and Bradshaw contributed more to the world of sports than diminutive Sebastian Coe of Great Britain did in setting world records in the 800-meter, 1,500-meter and mile runs? I think historians will look back on Coe's summer of '79 as one of the greatest achievements in sports. Be honest, you goofed!

DENNIS P. JUERGENS
Fort Wayne, Ind.

Sir:

Hardier Ronaldo Nehemiah should have won the award.

BRIAN COOK
Eugene, Ore.

Sir:

Gentleman Earl Campbell is the real Sportsman of '79.

RICHARD R. HARVIN
Berument, Texas

Sir:

Obviously, Bjorn Borg and Bill Rodgers will have to settle for a recording of the Rolling Stones' *Time Is on My Side*. When their careers are over—with or without SI's recognition—they will have taken their places as the greatest their sports have ever known.

TIM MORRIS
Farmingdale, N.J.

DE BURG

Sir:

Excuse me, but after reading your article I'm still slightly confused. Who really won the Sportsman of the Year 24-31? Willie Stargell and Terry Bradshaw? Or De Burch?

MICHAEL P. GEROW
Stierli, N.Y.

Sir:

Golly, that Pittsburgh sounds like one terrific place. I can't wait for your reviews of Cleveland and Buffalo. Incidentally, Myron Cope makes Howard Cosell sound like Sir Laurence Olivier.

JO ANN THARNT
San Antonio

Sir:

Your story should have been titled: "It's the Pitts, or Terry and the Pirate."

CHARLES THORNE
Sporewrier
The Saginaw News
Saginaw, Mich.

Sir:

Terry Bradshaw and Willie Stargell are truly great professionals and deserve the credit that they are now receiving. However, in our city we have a saying: Baltimore is Best.

MATT EMM
Baltimore

PAUL'S ALL-PROS

Sir:

I agree with Paul Zimmerman's All-Pro selections (*The Gospel According to Paul*, Dec. 24-31), except for his omission of a very important kicker, Mark Moseley of the Redskins. How can Zimmerman leave out the best at his position in pro football? Given the opportunity, Moseley would have saved as many games as he was asked to. And on Dec. 16, when the clock ran out while the Skins were trying to call time, Moseley was denied a chance for a 62-yarder against the Cowboys that no doubt would have won the NFC Eastern Division for Washington. Remember also, that Paul never wrote the Gospel, but Mark did.

PETE KNAUSTEN
Elizabet City, Md.

Sir:

Who is Paul Zimmerman anyway? To my knowledge, Mark Moseley is the only kicker who made all his extra-point tries in '79. Who cares how many games a kicker has won? Dependability and scoring are what count. And in those departments, Moseley can match any kicker in the league.

ANDY MAYER
Bethesda, Md.

Sir:

If you were aware that Walter Payton "played hurt most of the time and the Bears had no passing attack to take the heat off," then the fact that he won his fourth consecutive NFC rushing title should have weighed your decision in his favor.

GARY MILLER
Woodridge, Ill.

Sir: Choosing Otis Anderson over Walter Payton is the craziest thing I've ever heard of. I admit Anderson is a good runner, but Payton is in an entirely different class. He's proficient in all aspects of playing his position. I suggest you take a poll of all 28 coaches as to whom they would rather have in their backfield. I am sure the consensus would be Walter Payton!

MICHAEL DOYLE
Chicago

Sir: Your Paul is a prophet. His selection of Brian Sipe as the All-Pro quarterback showed great insight.

DAVE DAUBENMIRE
Mount Vernon, Ohio

Sir: Granted, Brian Sipe is an excellent quarterback, but he hasn't had the season Roger Staubach has. Also, the Browns are at home, while the Staubach-led Cowboys made it to the divisional playoffs.

RICHARD LOWENTHAL
Sherman, Texas

Sir: Roger Staubach is the All-Pro for 1979 and the quarterback for the decade. No ifs, ands or buts!

CHET RAGSDALE
Hewitt, Texas

Sir: I've never even heard of Louie Wright!

Lemar Parrish should have been Paul Zimmerman's "automatic" choice at cornerback.

LARRY ALLEN
McLean, Va.

Sir: Who is Harry Carson? Randy Gradishar at least deserved to have his name mentioned.

WINSTON WALTON
Cotati, Calif.

Sir: I am thrilled that Keith Krepfle made your All-Pro team, but I am furious that Charlie Johnson, the Eagles' middle guard, wasn't mentioned. Johnson could handle your center, Mike Webster, any day.

JAY BADER
Medford, N.J.

UCLAN ELAN

Sir: What do you mean "The Bruins Are in Ruins" (Dec. 24-31)? You can't judge a team on how well it is doing after only five games. UCLA lost to Notre Dame by only a couple of free throws and played a good game. Wait until the Bruins start losing big before you say they're in ruins.

DAVID SANDERS
Sterling, Miss.

Sir: UCLA basketball may be lower than it has been for some time, but the Bruins at ebb are still better than most teams riding a crest. I would hazard a guess that most of the schools in the country would be glad to

swap squads with Larry Brown. Instead of being omnipotent, like the teams of the past, the Bruins have "fallen" to being merely potent.

It may not happen this year, but before long Larry Keith may be forced to begin an article with the line "The Bruins are back." Many fans will reply, "They never left."

ROY L. RICHTER
Montgomery City, Mo.

Sir: I distinctly remember your doomsaying "End of an Era" cover story on UCLA (April 1, 1974), which was followed by the Bruins' 1975 national championship. Obviously, Larry Keith forgot.

JEFF KURTZ
Pacific Palisades, Calif.

Sir: Larry Keith's article will come back to haunt him in March.

RICHARD ZIMMAN
Montebello, Calif.

THE STRENGTH OF SAMPSON

Sir: As a student at the University of Virginia, I was pleased with your cover and article on Ralph Sampson (*His Future Is Up in the Air*, Dec. 17). However, I was a bit disturbed by Larry Keith's statement, "For the first time in their undistinguished history the Cavaliers have been winning more on talent than on execution." Let me remind you, the Cavaliers have had two straight NIT appearances with

continued

FROM HEAD TO FOOT

Sir: After reading your article on NBA trainers (*Dispersers of Love and Lament*, Dec. 17), I don't know who is most responsible for setting the profession back 25 years—SI, the NBA or those trainers mentioned.

As a group, trainers have been striving for

respectability, both educationally and professionally. We want to be recognized for our ability to prevent, manage and rehabilitate injuries to athletes. Apparently, there are still a few who maintain the less desirable image of the ankle tapper, the golfer and the court jester. I sincerely hope that the general public reading this article does not think that your sampling of NBA trainers is typical of the entire profession.

NICHOLAS PASSARETTI, M.Ed., R.P.T.,
A.T.C.
Chief Athletic Trainer/Therapist
Boston University
Boston

Sir: Fantastic! I thought your article on trainers was great—and funny. It showed that trainers do more than just play doctor. They keep the team happy and organized. Without them, teams would be totally disorganized. Trainers are just as important to a team as the players.

JOHN MAKI
Memphis

Sir: The story on NBA trainers was very enjoyable. Having been a Marine drill instructor during World War II, I was especially inter-



ested in the drawing at the bottom of page 55 (above). Your basketball player has two right feet!

JOHN P. DALY
South Bend, Ind.

• When asked about the two right feet, Artist Michael Ramus said, "I've been known to do this before." And so he has (see left, in his illustrations for SI's article on hockey goals and their bizarre beliefs and rituals (*Reincarnation and 13 Pairs of Socks*, March 28, 1977). In explanation Ramus says, "I must have some deep psychological problem." We note, however, that Ramus always draws two right feet, never two left.—ED



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19TH HOLE continued

all-conference players Jeff Lamp and Lee Raker; they were ACC champs and NCAA tournament participants in 1976 with Wally Walker, now of the Seattle SuperSonics; and they were ranked in the Top Ten in 1972 with All-American Barry Parkhill, who went on to the ABA.

RICHARD FERRUS
Hollywood, Fla.

Sir:

Who are Lee Raker, Mike Owens, Jeff Jones, Terry Gates and Garland Jefferson? If you don't know, they are basketball players for the University of Virginia. Although you did mention Jeff Lamp briefly and stated that he was last year's ACC scoring leader with an average of 22.9 points per game, the only other thing I read was Ralph Sampson, Ralph Sampson. Ralph Sampson. It takes more than one player to make a good basketball team. Nothing less than a combined effort will be required to turn the Cavaliers into championship material.

JERRY BOOTH
Richmond

TORCHY, BO AND ROCKY

Sir:

I was raised and still live in the Fox Cities in Wisconsin, and I therefore was very happy to read your excellent article on Central Florida's Coach Gene (Torchy) Clark and his son Bo (He's a Tough Gun of a Son, Dec. 17). One additional item that may interest your readers is that while Torchy was coaching at Xavier High School in Appleton, Wis. one of his football and basketball players was Rocky Bleier. During the years Bleier played, Xavier never lost a football game and won 49 basketball games in a row, a state record.

STEVEN ANDREWS
Kimberly, Wis.

THE RUTTMANS

Sir:

Even though I have been a subscriber for 20 years, this is the first letter I have written to SI. After reading Frank Deford's article on motor sports' Ruttman family (*Now Joe Must Carry the Flag*, Dec. 17), I felt compelled to congratulate him on such a superb effort.

Most racing fans—and I am an ardent one—know who Joe and Troy Ruttman are, but until this sensitive article was written, few probably really knew them well. Thanks to Deford I now feel as though we have all been introduced.

JOE JENNINGS
Burke, Va.

Sir:

Congratulations to Frank Deford on a wonderful and moving story about the Ruttmans. There are so many deserving drivers every year at Indy, it is difficult to have a sentimental favorite. But it will be hard not to root for Joe Ruttman to win the big one this May.

KENNETH R. LYON
Olympia, Wash.

HUNTERS VS. LANDOWNERS

Sir:

I just finished reading Michael Baughman's *VIEWPOINT* (Dec. 17) concerning the conflict between hunters and landowners. He described the situation very well, but since my husband and I are landowners, there are a couple of other points I'd like to bring up.

First, it has always irritated me that the state thinks it has the right to sell other people permission to hunt on my land, and many hunters feel that their hunting licenses guarantee them that right. After all, if all hunters were restricted to government property, they would be packed in shoulder to shoulder.

Second, why should we landowners have to buy a license to hunt on our own land? It doesn't seem fair.

To illustrate the point to those hunters who think they should have free rein over all open land, whether it is privately owned or not, I have always wanted to go into Omaha, walk into someone's backyard, turn on his barbecue grill, stretch out on his patio and watch the fireworks explode. Can you imagine what would happen when the owner came out and found me there? It's really all the same thing—someone trespassing on someone else's private property.

JENNIFER LUTHER
Orleans, Neb.

Sir:

I am not a supporter of hunting for sport, but I was impressed by Michael Baughman's logical conclusions. My response, however, is directed to his remark about the rights of a landowner who has come from out of state to restrict a third-generation Oregonian in the use of his native state.

In the course of my travels I have often heard the rights of the native defended against the rights of the non-native. Yet in my own state of California, where my family has resided for more than 100 years, the recent arrival seems to reign supreme, no matter what crime he may commit against the natives or the environment. This seems to be especially true in the southern part of the state.

California is a sportsman's paradise, as your magazine has so often pointed out. I do not wish to deny this paradise to anyone. I do wish to go on record as saying that I object to the vast hordes who descend upon this state and claim as inalienable their right to destroy, pollute and monopolize, in their own advantage, the beauty and pleasure that are here for all to enjoy. I ask those who use California's facilities to stop and consider their actions and to appreciate the history and the future of this Golden State.

BILL MOORE
Bellflower, Calif.

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